

CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS PLANNING DEPARTMENT

## DOWNTOWN EAST / NORTH LOOP MASTER PLAN

### Chapter Five Urban Design Plan

Chapter Five of the *Minneapolis Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan* calls for the development a wide array of initiatives that are meant to improve and distinguish the design of the public realm in the Project Area.

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter Five sets out the Urban Design Plan for the Project Area. The Urban Design Plan includes a broad range of analysis and recommendations aimed at improving the character and quality of the built environment at a variety of scales – from the broad scope of Downtown as a whole to potential solutions for specific locations. This chapter begins with the nuts-and-bolts of how the public realm should be improved by addressing the ways in which it is experienced while moving from place to place. The second section of the chapter offers two case studies, each with specific proposals for how to tackle two different kinds of urban design challenges. The third section looks in detail at ways to improve the overall experience of Downtown East and the North Loop, by considering the role that gateways and view corridors play in the wider built environment of the Downtown and in the city as a whole. The fourth section of the chapter is an in-depth look at the relationship between the design of individual buildings, the intensity of land uses, and the overall character of the city. The chapter ends by presenting images of three-dimensional computer models and character sketches that are developed from the information in the recommended Land Use Plan.

### SHAPING THE CITY THROUGH THE DESIGN OF THE PUBLIC REALM

Many older, core cities across the nation face the common problem of a stagnant or receding tax base, due in large part to competition from easy-to-access suburban centers served by the free-way network. As challenges to the local tax base continue over prolonged periods, municipal governments look for more ways to encourage investment in the city – especially downtown – as a means to draw in new development, new workers, new residents,

and new visitors. A key piece of forging reinvestment in the city is improving the quality of those places where people move about and interact as part of their daily lives – the public realm.

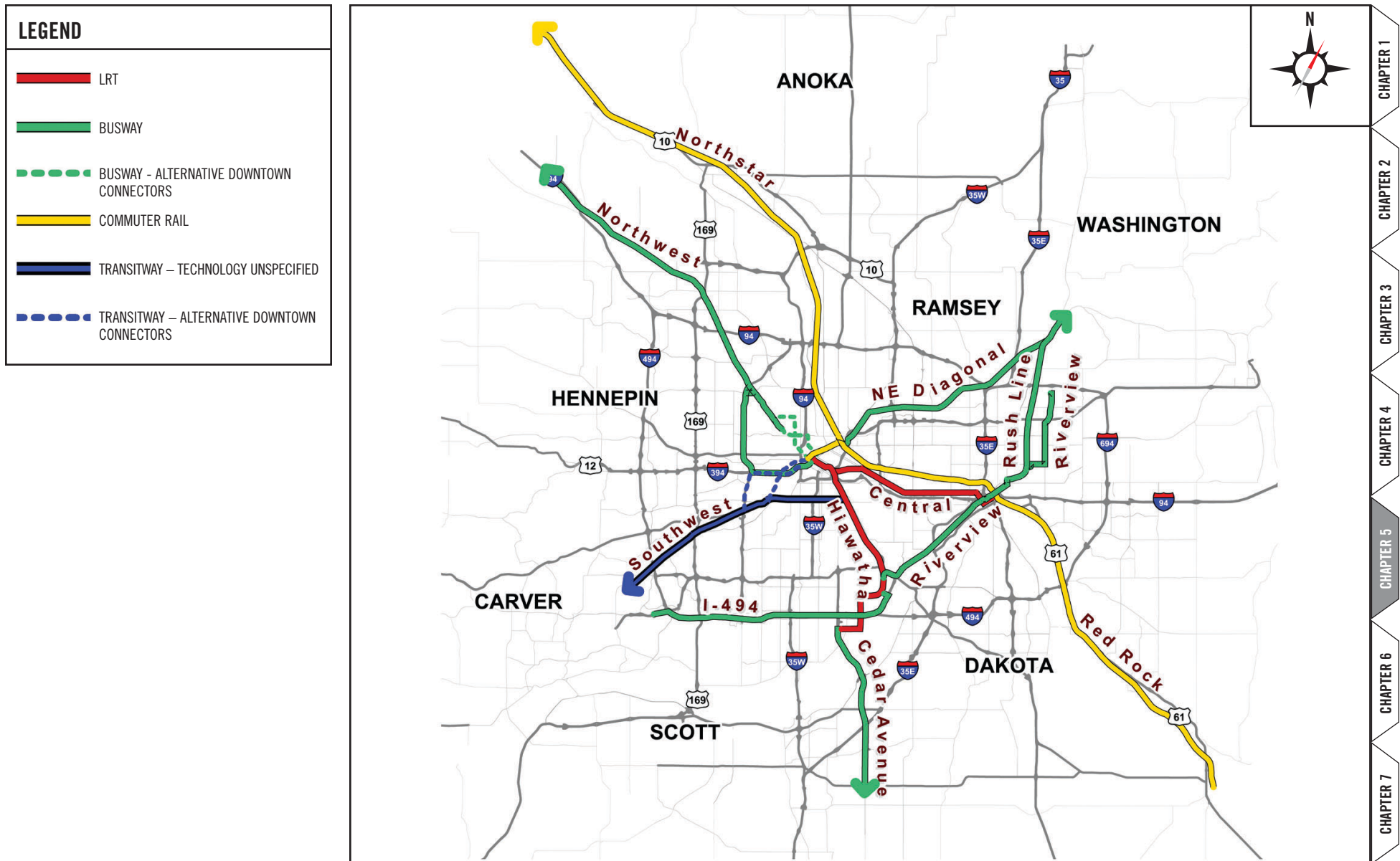
The following section proposes a series of existing and proposed enhancements to the public realm that, if paid proper attention, will add immeasurably to the utility and enjoyment of public space within the Project Area. More importantly, such improvements will greatly improve the development capacity of the Project Area by helping to facilitate tightly woven “Complete Communities.”

### Rail Transit in Downtown Minneapolis

The key impetus for preparing the *Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan* stems from a desire to capitalize on the opportunities that can be derived from the incorporation of new rail transit infrastructure into the existing fabric of Downtown Minneapolis. The most important input to, and benefit derived from, Downtown’s economic and physical expansion is the planning, development, and construction of new rail transit facilities that link Downtown Minneapolis with other parts of the city, the metropolitan area, and the region (See Figure 5.1, page 50).

*Hiawatha Light Rail Transit:* Initial construction of the Hiawatha Light Rail Transit line is well underway and initial service is expected to begin in the Spring of 2004. This light rail transit line will run along North 5th Street, South 5th Street, and Hiawatha Avenue to connect Downtown Minneapolis to the neighborhoods and communities in South Minneapolis, the Minneapolis / St. Paul International Airport, the City of Bloomington, and the Mall of America. The Hiawatha LRT is expected to be fully operational in 2005.

*Central Corridor Light Rail Transit:* Preliminary planning is underway to connect Downtown Minneapolis and the Hiawatha LRT to downtown St. Paul through a project known as the Central Corridor LRT. The Central Corridor Light Rail Line would fork off of the Hiawatha Line near the east side of the Metrodome.



### Figure 5.1 Map of Metropolitan Area Multi-Modal Transit Plan 2025

Source: Metropolitan Council

*NorthStar Commuter Rail:* Planning is also underway for modifications that will be made along an eighty mile stretch of the Burlington Northern freight rail lines to add the first line of commuter rail service to the Twin Cities region. Known as NorthStar Commuter Rail, this line will run to and from the North Loop in Downtown Minneapolis connecting the city to points northwest, most notably Anoka and St. Cloud, Minnesota.

*RedRock Commuter Rail:* Preliminary planning is underway to connect Downtown Minneapolis by commuter rail to Downtown St. Paul and Hastings, Minnesota along existing rail tracks that connect both downtowns to the cities and towns in the southeast metro. The proposed connection identified for this route will share tracks with the NorthStar Line as it enters and leaves Downtown Minneapolis.

*Other Potential Rail Corridors:* Long range planning is also underway to expand commuter rail service and/or light rail service to include connections between Downtown Minneapolis and the City's southwest suburbs, most likely along the Dan Patch rail corridor. This corridor would stretch from Downtown Minneapolis, southwest along the Burlington Northern rail corridor, as an extension of the NorthStar corridor.

In addition, an extension to the light rail system is also contemplated to link Downtown Minneapolis to its western suburbs. This extension would be built westward from the end of the Hiawatha line at North 5th Street and Fifth Avenue North.

### Revisions to the Downtown Street Grid

One of the best features of the public realm in Downtown Minneapolis is already in place – a well-defined street network divided into relatively compact, walkable blocks. Maintaining utility and convenience of the Downtown street grid is critical to ensuring access across the entire CBD for pedestrians, bicycles, buses, trucks and automobiles. However, as new opportunities

present themselves, it is important to consider modifications and adjustment to the existing street system that will ensure that it continues to serve downtown livability and economic vitality, rather than detract from it (see Figure 5.2, page 52).

In the near term, the City should engage in further analysis and discussion of the following issues related to the street system and downtown traffic patterns:

- Consider eliminating one of the two westbound traffic lanes on South 5th Street between Fifth Avenue South and Chicago Avenue in order to extend and maintain a consistent and high quality pedestrian spine along the LRT Corridor.
- Development of a detailed program to divert through traffic entering South 5th Street (from east Interstate 94) at 11th Avenue South to South 3rd Street and South 7th Street.

In the long term, the City should engage in further analysis and discussion of the following issues related to the street system and Downtown traffic patterns:

*Rebuilding the Washington Avenue / I-35W interchange:* In Downtown East, the City will need to work closely with Hennepin County and MnDOT to ensure realization of the long-term plan to build a new interchange that funnels traffic to and from South 3rd Street and South 4th Street respectively. Rebuilding this interchange would take a great deal of surface traffic off Washington Avenue South and enable it to become a more pedestrian-friendly commercial corridor that includes retail and services for new neighborhoods on either side. In addition, new developable land would be made available by relocating the 4th Street viaduct northward and pairing it with the 3rd Street freeway exit. Likewise, linking the existing sections of South 3rd Street with a new stretch that extends to 11th Avenue South would help to better distribute traffic throughout this area of downtown, thereby enhancing property values.

## LEGEND

- HIAWATHA LRT (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)
- TRANSIT STATIONS
- - - PROPOSED RAIL TRANSIT LINES
- 1/4 MILE RADIUS TO LRT STATION
- STREET GRID ADDITIONS
- - - REMOVAL OF EXISTING FREEWAY VIADUCT
- EXISTING DOWNTOWN CORE
- - - BOUNDARY FOR EXPANSION OF DOWNTOWN CORE

*NOTE: Based on the current state of negotiations and financing for the construction of new stadia, it is likely that the HHH Metrodome will remain viable and active in the foreseeable future. In the event that the Metrodome becomes redundant over the course of the next twenty-five years, however, redevelopment on that site will offer an excellent opportunity to fill out transit-oriented development at LRT station sites on the east and west sides of the site (see Figure 4.18). In such a scenario, several new streets would need to be built.*

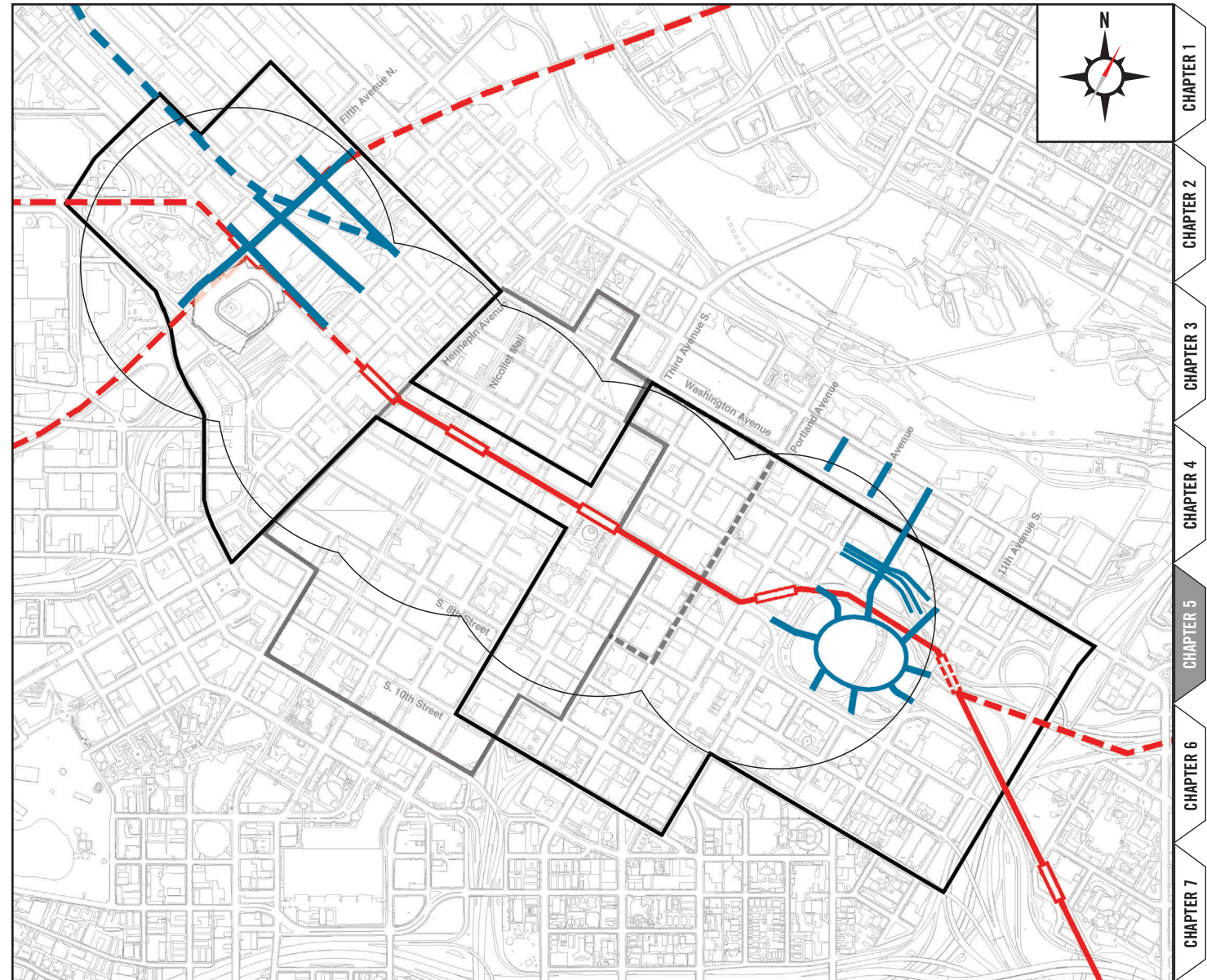


Figure 5.2 Map of Additions to the Downtown Street Grid

*Dismantling the 4th Street Viaduct to westbound Interstate 94:* In the North Loop, the City should provide leadership for eliminating the freeway viaduct that currently connects I-94 with North 3rd Street and North 4th Street. Once the NorthStar Commuter Rail is operational, it will offer an important alternative to commuters in the northwest commuter shed. As such, it is possible that rail transit might relieve a significant portion of the vehicular traffic that is currently using this viaduct. Removing the viaduct is not meant to cut off freeway access from this end of downtown, but to replace it with an appropriately-scaled interchange that is more compatible with the development potential of surrounding neighborhoods. The intention is to return traffic to local surface streets, eliminate an obstruction to surrounding development, and in doing so enhance neighborhood property values. In pursuit of this concept - which was first presented in the *Hennepin County Multi-Modal Station Area Plan* - several important questions need to be examined more closely. This includes studying the impact of surface traffic upon at-grade intersections (in place of the viaduct), especially in relation to the ability to provide sufficient capacity at the expected traffic volumes; the ability to gain MnDOT approval; and the costs and potential funding sources for this demolition and reconstruction project.

*New city streets in the air rights development site over the Burlington Northern Right-of-Way and Interstate 394:* In the North Loop, new freeway decking should be constructed to elevate and recreate three new sections of street. In doing so, maximum flexibility for rail options – Amtrak, Commuter Rail and LRT – will be maintained well into the future. Likewise, new development in “The Cut” over the Burlington Northern right-of-way and Interstate 394 will be re-knit into the fabric of the surrounding neighborhood. New sections of street are needed on Fourth Avenue North, between North 3rd Street and North 5th Street, North 3rd Street between Second Avenue North and Fifth Avenue North, and (if the viaduct is removed) North 4th Street between Second Avenue North and Fifth Avenue North.

*New city streets if the Metrodome site needs to be redeveloped:* In the event that the Metrodome becomes redundant over the course of the next twenty-five years, the six block area should be redeveloped as a new downtown neighborhood. In such a scenario a new network of city streets would need to be developed to facilitate access through the existing megablock (which totals six city blocks). Rather than returning the street grid that was present prior to the construction of the Metrodome, redevelopment of this site would be an opportunity to create a new street pattern that focuses on a highly visible “central” park. The intent is to create a high-amenity, mixed-income neighborhood in a place that feels somewhat separate from – but is located right within the heart of Downtown.

### Bicycle Network

Bicycles should play an ever-increasing role in the movement of people to, from, and within Downtown Minneapolis. In order to ensure that bicycle travel is safe and convenient, it is necessary to extend the existing bicycle network in both the near term and over the long term. Near term extensions are already proposed by the City of Minneapolis. Long term extensions should be incorporated over time as new neighborhoods and infrastructure are developed. The overall goal for the Downtown bicycle network is to create near and long term extensions to the existing bicycle network to facilitate better integration with the downtown pedestrian circulation system, new rail transit lines, and proposed parks and open spaces. The completion of a full blown network of on-street lanes and off-street trails will continue to enhance travel and commuting options that might encourage commuters to choose options that don’t necessarily include the private automobile (see Figure 5.3, page 54).

## LEGEND

- HIAWATHA LRT (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)
- TRANSIT STATIONS
- - - PROPOSED RAIL TRANSIT LINES
- 1/4 MILE RADIUS TO LRT STATION
- EXISTING ON-STREET BIKE LANES AND OFF-STREET BIKE TRAILS
- - - NEAR TERM EXTENSIONS TO ON-STREET BIKE LANES AND OFF-STREET BIKE TRAILS
- LONG TERM EXTENSIONS TO ON-STREET BIKE LANES AND OFF-STREET BIKE TRAILS

Goal: Near and long term extensions to the existing bicycle network to facilitate better integration with the downtown pedestrian circulation system, new rail transit lines, and proposed parks and open spaces

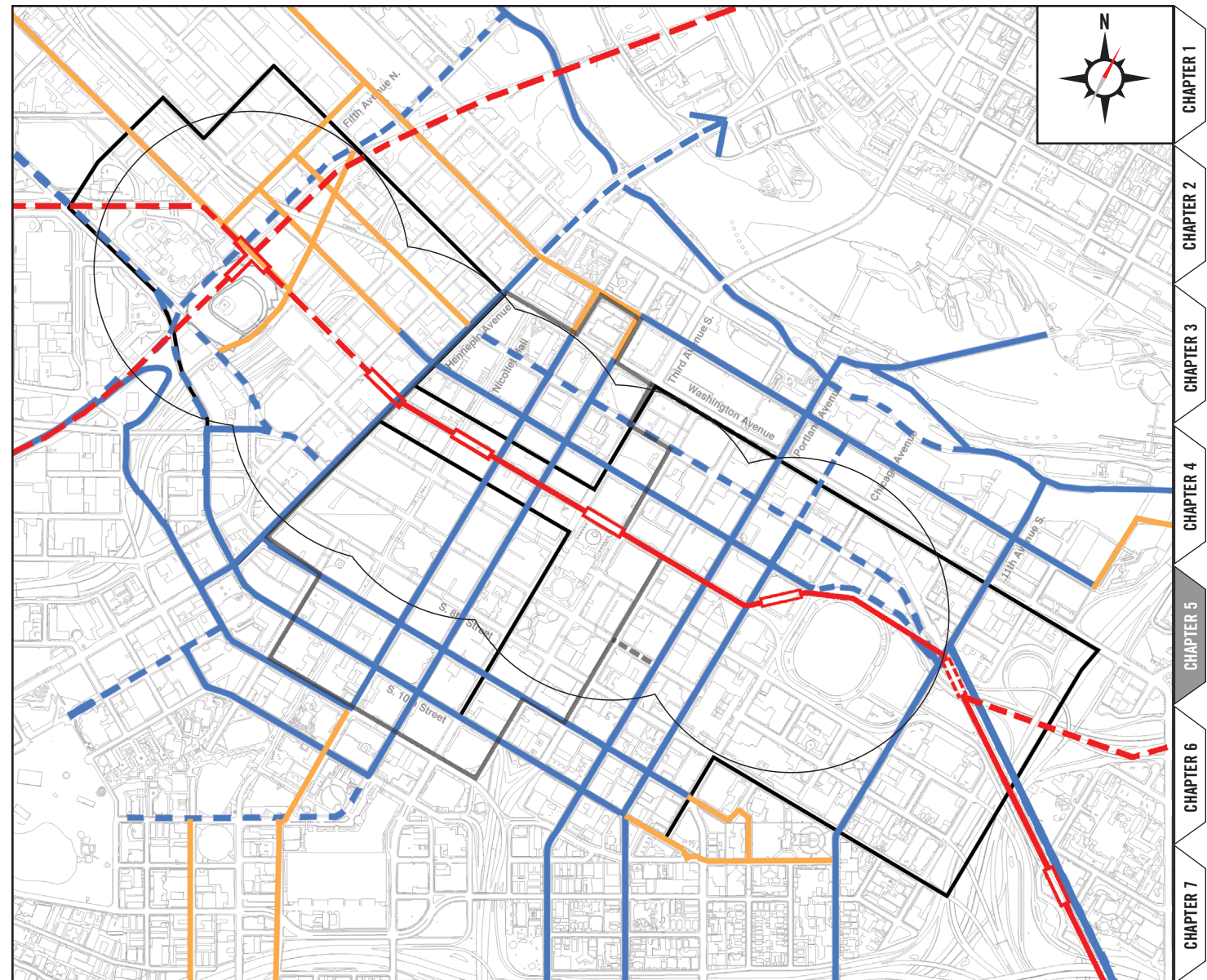


Figure 5.3 Map of Extensions to the Downtown Bicycle Network

### *Policies for the Downtown Bicycle Network*

- *Continue to build extensions to the bicycle network within the Project Area, especially east/west along 4th Street from Downtown East to Hennepin Avenue, and on North 7th Street from Hennepin Avenue into the North Loop and beyond.*
- *Continue to build extensions to the bicycle network that help connect the Project Area to the Central Riverfront, Elliot Park, Loring Park, and neighborhoods surrounding the CBD.*
- *Complete the bicycle connection through the North Loop from the west along the Cedar Lake Trail to Fourth Avenue North and the West River Road.*
- *Provide convenient connections from the bicycle network to new and existing features of the public realm including parks, plazas, skyway stair towers, and rail transit stations.*
- *Ensure adequate, evenly distributed supply of bike racks, lock points, and rental storage lockers for bicycle commuters.*
- *Educate automobile drivers and bicyclist on proper etiquette for sharing the road.*

## Pedestrian Circulation

### *Street-Level Pedestrian Corridors*

The most immediate human reaction to the existing public environment in many parts of Downtown East and the North Loop is that it is dominated by vehicles, vehicular movement, and large expanses of parked cars. Quite simply, vehicles often dominate the street at the expense of pedestrians, and in some cases, sidewalks are not conducive to pedestrian movement at all. The lack of streetscape and pedestrian amenities, the presence of large stretches of blank building walls, intrusive ramp entry / egress points, and the lack of meaningful wayfinding devices all discourage pedestrian activity and inhibit the ability to forge Complete Communities (see Figures 5.4 and 5.5, pages 56 and 57).

### *Skyways*

Over a period of four decades, the emergence of the Skyway System has played a key role in maintaining and enhancing the economic health of Downtown Minneapolis by ensuring that the core remains competitive. The Skyway System is considered essential to Downtown property owners, merchants, and workers alike. The role of skyways as an enhancement to the construction of Class-A office space in the Downtown Core is not in question. New additions to the office core should be connected to the existing Skyway System on the east side of Downtown. On the west side of Downtown, new extensions to the system should be made to link the new Ballpark, the Multi-Modal Station, and nearby high-intensity development projects in the air rights zone above the rail and interstate rights-of-way. Given the historic character and preservation designation of buildings in the Warehouse District, it is not recommended that skyways be built anywhere else west of Hennepin Avenue.

Beyond the extension zones recommended, skyways should not be built into existing, revitalized, and emerging neighborhoods in

Downtown East or the North Loop. Building skyways in such neighborhoods is counterproductive to the aims of developing Complete Communities. The presence of two different pedestrian networks – the skyways and the sidewalks – would undermine the character and quality of neighborhood streets by giving the impression that there is little foot traffic. Though they might seem convenient for some, skyways to and from medium and low intensity districts simply do not have a sufficient level of use to warrant their construction. Underused skyways often detract from an ongoing sense of safety, security, and accessibility. The exception to this rule is that high-intensity residential developments may generate a sufficient amount of foot traffic to warrant a skyway connection as long as the project is directly adjacent to blocks that are already connected to the existing system (see Figure 5.6 and 5.7, pages 58 and 59).

## Streetscapes, Open Space, and Reforestation

The character of different districts and neighborhoods within Downtown is strongly connected to the design of individual buildings and the way in which a group of buildings “sit” in relation to one another. But the experience of the city – particularly as one moves through it – is greatly influenced by the quality and character of the interstitial places between downtown buildings. Presently, surface parking lots are the most visible sort of interstitial space across large portions of the Project Area. As new development occurs and surface parking lots are replaced with off-street parking in structured ramps, the remaining interstitial spaces – streets, plazas, and public parks – will have greater visibility and will play a greater role in shaping the character of different downtown districts and neighborhoods.

### *Creating new downtown open space*

It is ironic that while Minneapolis enjoys international renown for a park system that makes the most of the city’s lakes, rivers, and creeks, there is precious little pleasing green space / open space throughout much of Downtown. There are notable exceptions.

## LEGEND

- HIAWATHA LRT (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)
- TRANSIT STATIONS
- - - PROPOSED RAIL TRANSIT LINES
- 1/4 MILE RADIUS TO LRT STATION
- PRIMARY PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT CORRIDORS
- SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL, ENTERTAINMENT, AND SHOPPING DESTINATIONS

Goal: Creation of pedestrian-oriented places and a downtown with truly pedestrian character experienced in the streets and public spaces of Downtown East and the North Loop

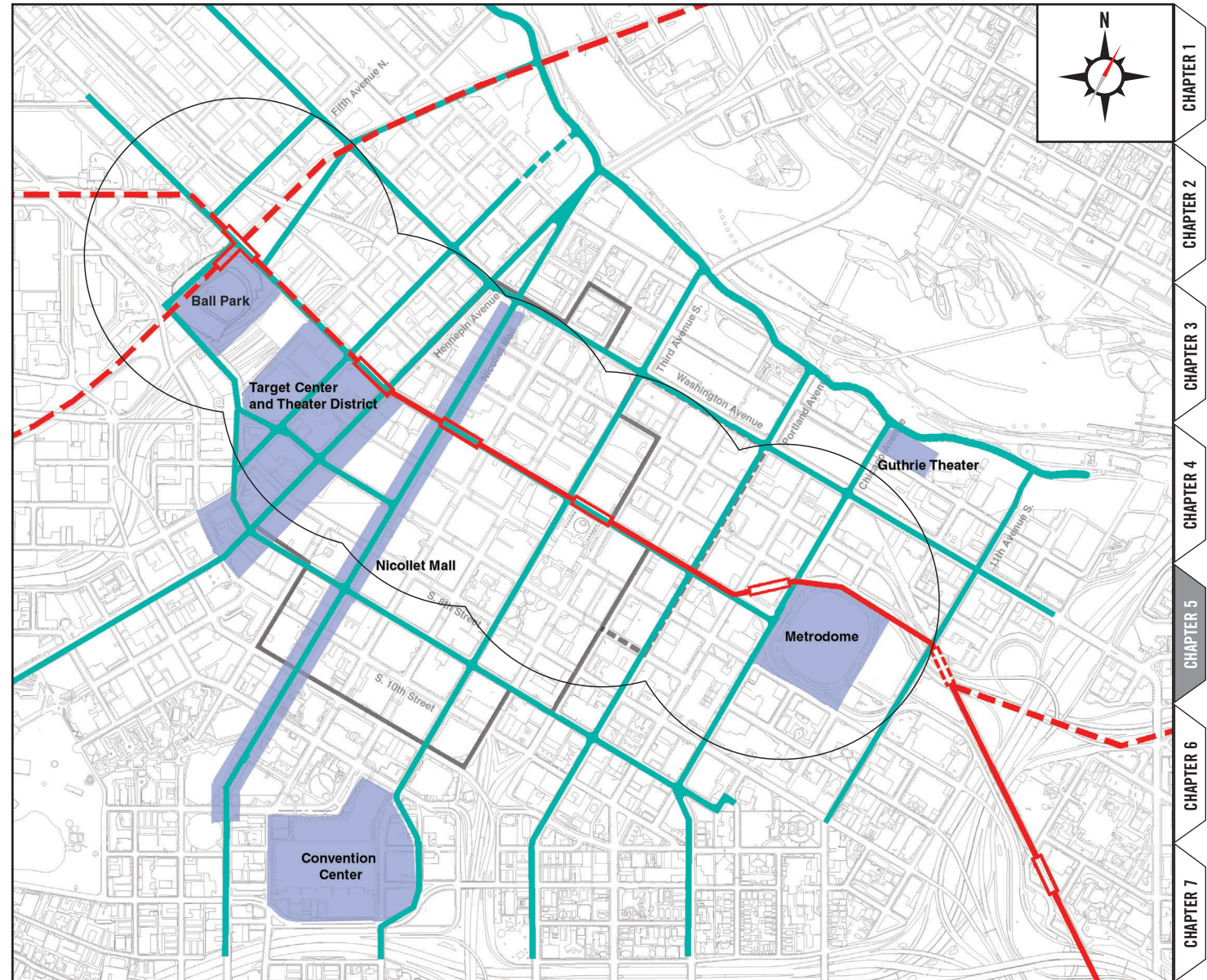


Figure 5.4 Map of Designated Primary Pedestrian Corridors

## EXISTING CONDITIONS



Streets leading to some Downtown destinations are abysmal; pedestrian amenities (especially pedestrian scaled street lighting) are absent and the parking intrudes upon the pedestrian experience.

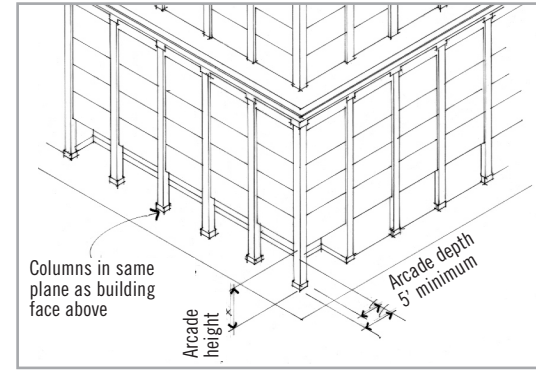


Wide curb cuts and ramp entries, especially those with multiple drives, can severely disrupt pedestrian movement, and may create wide areas where streetscape enhancements cannot be implemented.

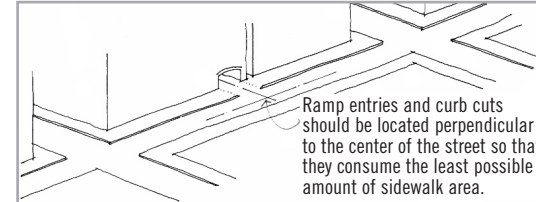


Parking structure entries that parallel the street severely interrupt pedestrian areas and consume huge areas that should be dedicated to pedestrian activity.

## SAMPLE SOLUTIONS



Where skyways do not exist, awnings and canopies are encouraged to protect pedestrians from rain, snow and sun.



Ramp entries and curb cuts should be designed and sized to minimize interruptions to pedestrian corridors.

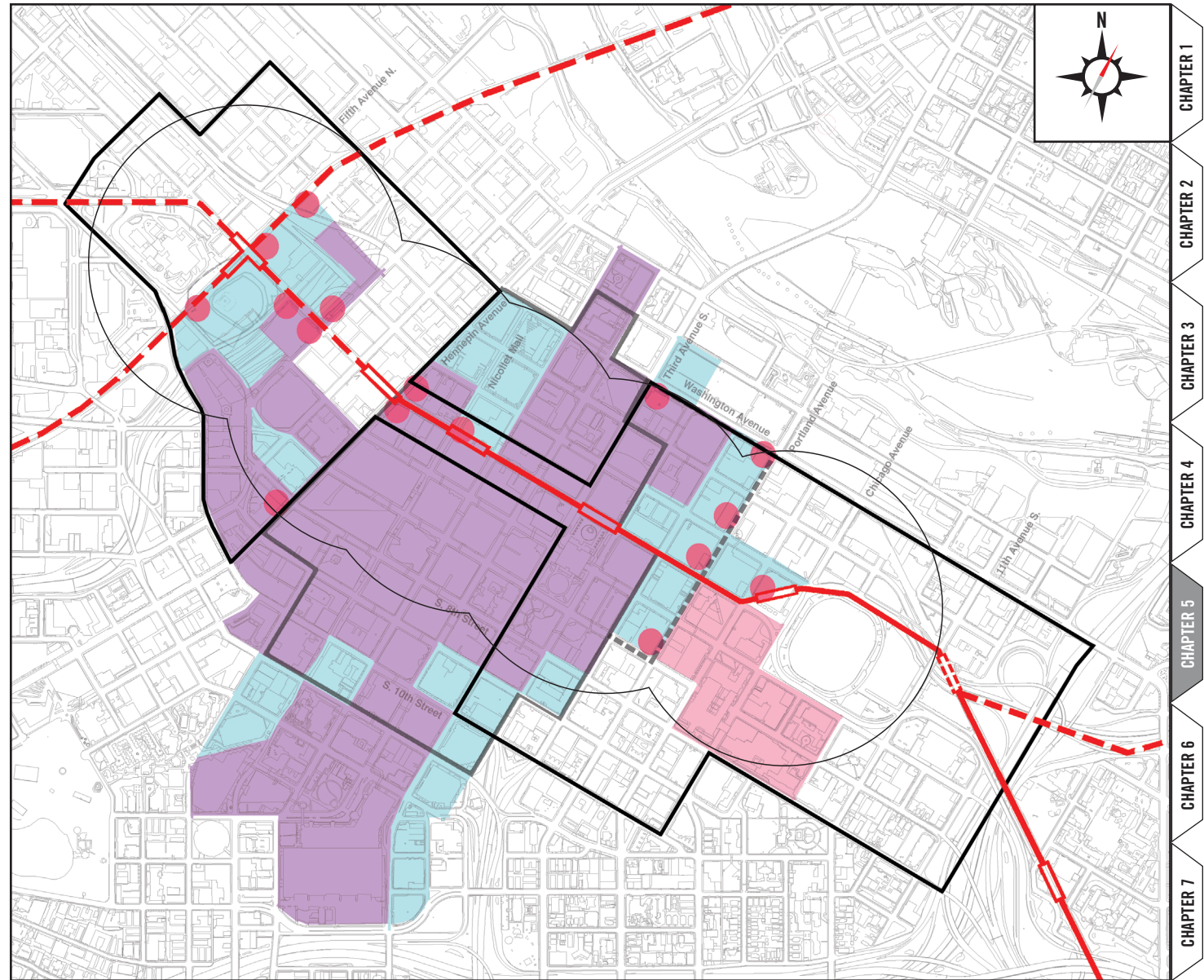


Sidewalks that have consistent materials, a uniform width, and a uniform arrangement of street elements are easier for pedestrians to navigate because they are visually legible. Pedestrian scaled street lighting and the addition of street trees help encourage people to travel on foot – rather than by car – to make local trips within Downtown.

Figure 5.5 Developing Primary Pedestrian Corridors

**LEGEND**

- HIAWATHA LRT (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)
- TRANSIT STATIONS
- - - PROPOSED RAIL TRANSIT LINES
- 1/4 MILE RADIUS TO LRT STATION
- EXISTING DOWNTOWN SKYWAY ZONE
- EXISTING HCMC SKYWAY ZONE
- PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO THE DOWNTOWN SKYWAY ZONE
- PROPOSED SKYWAY STAIR TOWER

**Figure 5.6 Map of Additions to the Skyway System**

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

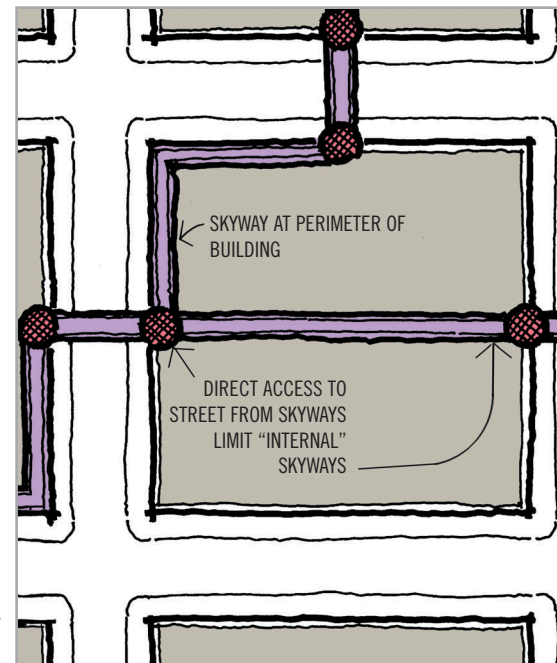


Much of the original skyway system was integrated into existing older buildings and bears little relation to the sidewalk system except for that portion which actually crosses over the street. The Soo Line Building (on the right side of this photo) is a good example. Extensions to the system that are part of new construction offer the opportunity to create more visible connections to the street by placing vertical circulation at the perimeter of the building as is the case with the Fifth Street Towers (on the left side of this photo)



An excellent example of how to connect the skyway system with the sidewalk system is in place at the new Target store on Nicollet Mall. Vertical circulation is located in a highly visible, highly “readable” building entrance located on the street corner. In addition, second floor concourses parallel city streets and have windows overlooking the Mall, which allows for easier navigation through the block by pedestrians.

## SAMPLE SOLUTIONS



Connections between city sidewalks and future additions to the Skyway System should be developed at stair towers that are highly visible and therefore easy to use. Skyway stair towers are especially important for making transitions between the skyways system and Primary Pedestrian Corridors, major transit stops, and significant parks and green spaces

Skyway-level concourses placed along the perimeter wall of a building help to foster visible connections between the skyway system and city sidewalks therefore making downtown legible and less confusing for pedestrians – especially visitors to Downtown.

Figure 5.7 Refining the Skyway System

### *Policies for Street-Level Pedestrian Corridors and the Skyway System*

- *Establish a hierarchy of streets within the Project Area that allows for differentiation between those streets that should receive a higher level of functional or aesthetic amenity because they serve – or are intended to serve – as major pedestrian connectors within and across Downtown.*
- *Encourage a hierarchy of minor pedestrian thoroughfares to allow for localized pedestrian circulation within specific districts and neighborhoods.*
- *Establish practices that maintain the right-of-way for pedestrians on sidewalks by minimizing the number and extent of driveway crossings / curb cuts. Access to and egress from parking ramps should be consolidated into a single curb cut.*
- *Access to and egress from parking ramps should be located mid-block, at right angles, to minimize disruption to pedestrian flow at street intersections.*
- *Design streets and buildings to eliminate long stretches of blank, inactive building walls.*
- *Introduce building components that*

Loring Park and Elliot Park are islands of green that anchor the community life of those neighborhoods. Mill Ruins Park and the West River Road are major assets currently being developed on the northern edge of Downtown. But throughout most of downtown – particularly within the Project Area – there is a pressing need to integrate more open, green space as a means to enhance the livability of Downtown for workers, residents, and visitors alike (see Figures 5.8 and 5.9, pages 61 and 62).

There are two kinds of open spaces that are needed Downtown – active open space and passive open space. “Active” open spaces are those that are used for either organized recreation facilities (such as ball fields, tennis courts, and the like) or organized gathering spaces for large crowds assembled for a concert, block party, or political rally. “Passive” open spaces are for activities that are slower paced and more reflective in nature. They are most often small and quiet spaces for people to withdraw in solitude or in small informal groups. In either case, parks and open spaces should serve the need to participate in city life; places where people go to be together, or where people go to be by themselves amidst the crowd of passersby.

Expanding the number and quality of downtown open spaces/green spaces is a difficult conundrum to overcome. Despite recent growth in the downtown residential market, the long term viability of new and rehabilitated neighborhoods is highly dependent on the livability of those neighborhoods. The existing deficiency of open space will only become more of a problem as new residents move Downtown. But the construction of new parks and green space is difficult to initiate as wholly independent projects because of the relatively high cost of downtown land. In addition, the lack of designated operating funds for new parks and green spaces means that even if they are built, they are apt to become liabilities if they are not cared for and properly maintained.

Incorporating new parks and open space as part of individual

building projects should continue to be pursued in Downtown Minneapolis. However, the resulting spaces are only large enough to expand the inventory of passive open spaces downtown. What's really needed is to incorporate parks that have enough land to include both meaningful passive spaces and useful active spaces.

Unfortunately, urban history has too few examples of the kind of grand gestures that were made over a hundred years ago when the city's park system was designed and initial land holdings were dedicated. Overcoming the lack of new downtown open space is unlikely if the provision of parks and open space is not incorporated into the city's larger development process. Incorporating downtown parks that truly serve the diverse downtown population must happen through an accumulation of both public and private efforts.

*Open Space Standards:* Some North American cities such as Vancouver, BC have a Parks / Open Space Standard of 2.75 acres of neighborhood park per 1,000 residents. Assuming that the downtown residential population will grow by 20,000-plus, incorporating this standard in Downtown Minneapolis would yield an expanded amount of park and open space in excess of 55 new acres. One way to ensure that the park system grows in proportion to the downtown population is to incorporate a dedicated one-time development fee on individual projects. Over time, such fees will accumulate enough to allow for the construction and maintenance of a new park that can be enjoyed by all.

*Open Space/Retail Interface:* There is a strong correlation between open space and retail development. People looking for a place to spend leisure time are often looking for a place to buy food, drinks, or concession items. In many downtown settings across North America, open spaces that are part of a mixed-use complex with a retail component appear to be more successful in terms of intensity of use than those that are not linked to retail activities. But in locations where the office rental rate is higher than the retail rental rate, developers are hard pressed to justify allocating

## LEGEND

- HIAWATHA LRT (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)
- TRANSIT STATIONS
- - - PROPOSED RAIL TRANSIT LINES
- 1/4 MILE RADIUS TO LRT STATION
- PROPOSED PARKS AND OPEN SPACE
- EXISTING PARKS AND OPEN SPACE
- PROPOSED STREETScape
- EXISTING STREETScape
- - - 1. SEE "CASE STUDY – 5TH STREET STREETScape" PAGES 68-77
- - - 2. SEE "REVISING THE PHYSICAL IMPACT OF THE HCMC MEGASTRUCTURE," PAGES 78-79

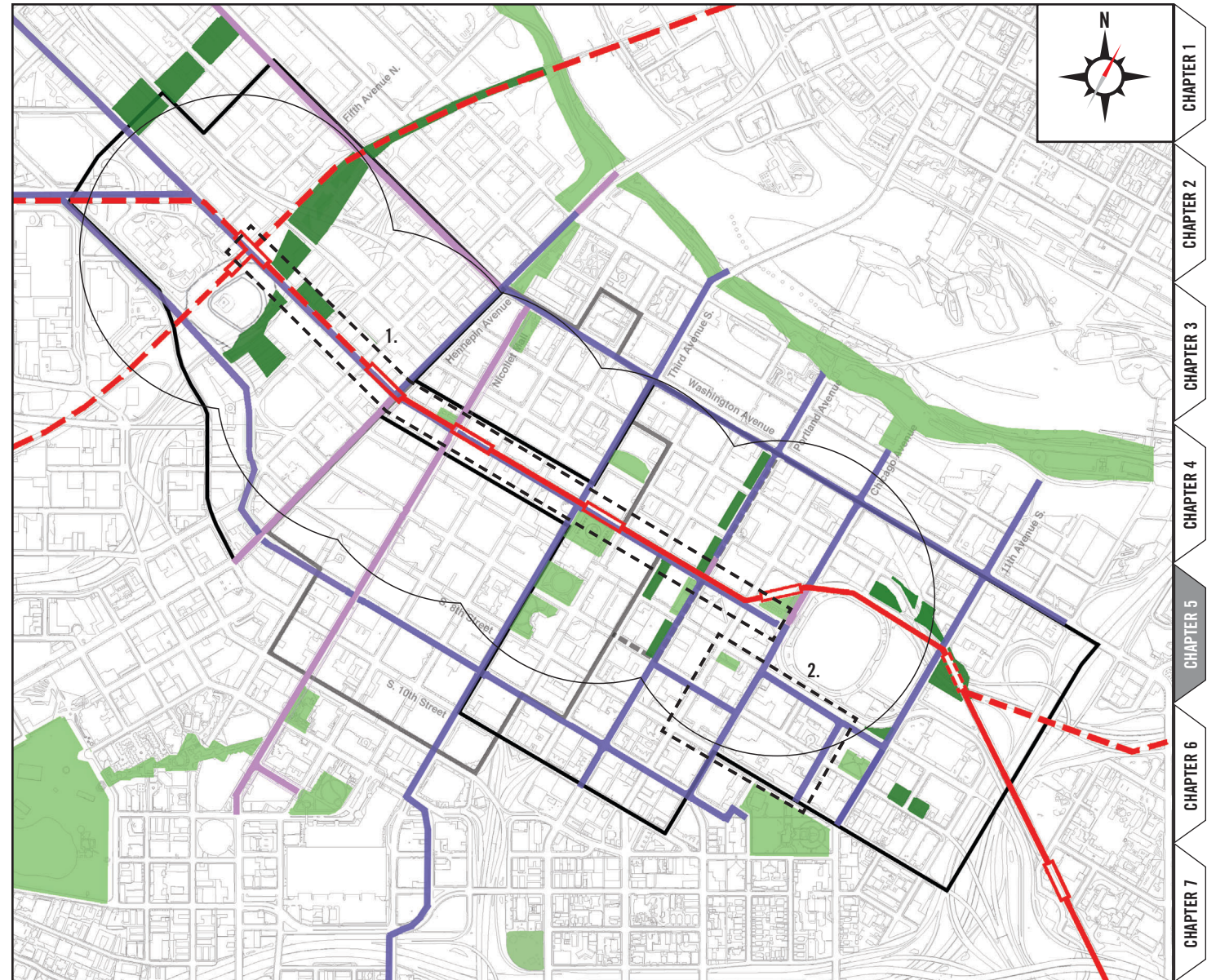


Figure 5.8 Map of Streetscape and Open Space

## CONDITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES



Some downtown streets could be great boulevards or prominent entries to Downtown. Instead, many streets – especially on the outer edges of Downtown – are merely unwelcoming thoroughfares because they are particularly inhospitable to pedestrians moving along the street or trying to cross it. Such streets create barriers between new and existing neighborhoods. For example, Washington Avenue inhibits pedestrian movement from the Downtown Core, Elliot Park and Downtown East to the amenities of the central riverfront. Instead, Washington Avenue – like several other downtown streets – should be redesigned as beautiful “seams” that knit together existing and emerging neighborhoods on either side.



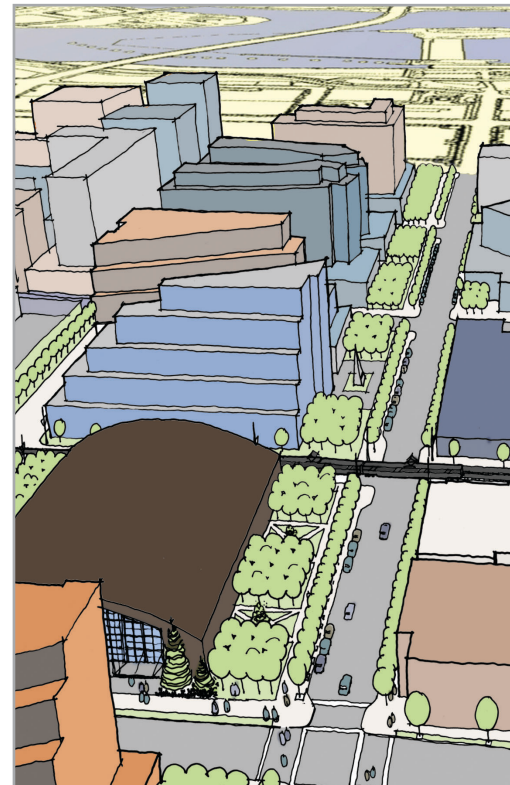
Some North American cities have recognized the value of Downtown open space and have created wide, continuous corridors of green through the urban fabric. Dedicating spaces large enough to allow for a healthy, mature tree canopy is especially important for realizing the increased benefit to the “feel” of Downtown, and the increased value to surrounding properties



The Nicollet Mall represents a public space that is recognized as Downtown's primary “gathering place” – it is both streetscape and, in a sense, open space.



A “greenway” offers a connection to the river along Portland Avenue and defines the Downtown Core.



A new linear park developed incrementally along the west side of Portland Avenue will build on two existing green spaces – one on the east side of the Armory and the other across the street from the Star Tribune Building. This new park offers a downtown amenity that helps organize new development and enhance surrounding property values.

At left is a view of the Portland Avenue Park looking north as it stretches to Washington Avenue from South 7th Street. The Portland Avenue Park is an opportunity to create a green “seam” that knits together the eastern edge of the extended Downtown office core and the western edge of a new mixed-use neighborhood focused on the Downtown East LRT Station; and it helps extend “fingers” of green south from the Mills District into the otherwise ordinary street grid of Downtown East and the northern portion of Elliot Park. The City might consider holding an international design contest for redefining the intersection of this park with the 5th Street LRT corridor and streetscape.

Figure 5.9 Streetscape and Open Space

*Policies Continued*

*offer protection to pedestrians, such as awnings and canopies, as a means to encourage pedestrian activity along streets, especially where skyway alternatives don't or won't exist.*

- *Encourage sidewalk retail and restaurants at locations specified in the Land Use Plan.*
- *Maintain prohibitions of new auto-oriented uses such as drive-in restaurants, banks, and retailers with drive-up windows.*
- *Concentrate skyways within the Downtown Core. A limited number of extensions beyond the core is acceptable as long as skyways are built to connect high-intensity uses that generate a great deal of foot traffic. Such uses include Class A office space, the Baseball Park, and the Multi-Modal Station.*
- *Prohibit the construction of skyways beyond the recommended extension zone.*
- *Create points where highly visible vertical circulation is built to forge direct connections between the Skyway System and downtown sidewalks.*
- *Construct skyway stair towers at the*

portions of allowable Floor-Area-Ratio (FAR) to retail. In this instance, public policy can possibly promote the integration of street-level retail with open space by not including retail space in FAR calculations.

*Streetscapes*

While the challenge of incorporating new parks into the Project Area will likely require a great deal of concerted effort and resources over the long term, improving the quality of public places in Downtown Minneapolis by incorporating streetscapes into the existing fabric of the city is far less challenging because the street grid and sidewalk network already are in place. The importance and impact of quality streetscapes should not be minimized. Developing streetscapes involves redefining the purpose of a particular street as more than a mere conveyance for moving vehicles by creating as pleasant an environment as possible for pedestrians as well. Walking from one part of the Downtown to another need not be drudgery. It should be encouraged through the implementation of enhancements that recreate a local linear environment at a pedestrian scale. Such enhancements include the following:

*Uniform Pedestrian Zones:* Because most of Downtown is already developed with existing buildings, it may not be possible to incorporate a single standard sidewalk width throughout the Project Area. However, it is possible to set a standard “pedestrian-clear” width for sidewalks along specific lengths of street that are streetscaped. The pedestrian-clear zone is the walkable sidewalk space that lies between building facades and light poles, signposts, parking meters, and the like. (In residential neighborhoods outside of downtown, pedestrian-clear space is more easily identifiable because there is grass on both sides of the sidewalk.) The pedestrian clear zone on downtown sidewalks should be between 10 and 14 feet wide and it should be clearly defined by a consistent sidewalk treatment. The left over space on either side is given over to the placement of the necessary utilities and pro-

posed amenities. For instance, all parking meters, streetlights, traffic signage and the like should be organized into a zone that falls between the pedestrian clear zone and the street curb. Likewise on the inside of the block, left over space in front of downtown buildings can be used to create distinctive entry zones or outdoor seating areas.

*Sidewalk bulb-outs / Traffic neck-downs:* Bulb-outs are extensions built into the sidewalk at key intersections – particularly along retail streets. Though it may be impractical for all downtown intersections in the near term, widening the sidewalks with bulb-outs at a sequence of intersections along the same street accomplishes a number of important goals simultaneously. It narrows the length of crosswalks from one side of the street to the other. Because pedestrians remain on sidewalk as far as the outer edge of cars parked on the street, they have better visibility of oncoming traffic before crossing the street and, conversely, are more visible to drivers. While the width of vehicular traffic lanes remains the same, the subliminal result of curbs being moved closer to travel lanes causes drivers to slow down, thus making pedestrians safer. Finally, because bulb-outs define permanent on-street parking zones, at-grade retail activity is encouraged because it is conceivable that drivers may find a “space at the door,” if only for a short while.

*Street lighting:* The ubiquitous brown “shoe-box” style light fixture found throughout downtown is functional and cost effective, but offers no opportunity to create a street that has an identity that distinguishes it from other downtown streets. Wherever possible, new streetscapes should incorporate fixtures that underscore the special character of a given street.

Due to the cost of maintaining multiple kinds of streetlights, it may be desirable to choose a small palette of fixtures that limit the variety of streetlights throughout Downtown, while still allowing a whole set of special streets to be distinguished from an existing set of ordinary streets. At the very least, pedestrian

*Policies Continued*

*edges of the Skyway System to facilitate a series of strong, highly-visible points of interface with City sidewalks and proposed open/green spaces.*

- *Locate new skyways within buildings in a manner that enables pedestrians to see the street from inside.*

scale fixtures should be incorporated into all new streetscapes as a way to improve safety and humanize the sidewalk environment on streets designated for a higher level of pedestrian use. Banner arms should be installed on streetlight poles in a uniform interval in all streetscapes as a quick means to infuse color and character to downtown neighborhoods.

**Public Art:** The City should continue to formalize policies and procedures for incorporating public art into all infrastructure projects throughout the Project Area. Because an ever-expanding palette of streetlights, bench types, and the like is cost-prohibitive to maintain, creating the sense of identity that distinguishes one streetscape from another should rest on the quality and character of the public art incorporated into each streetscape.

**Street furniture:** Streets that are rebuilt to incorporate streetscapes should be enhanced through the use of distinctive street furniture – such as benches, trash receptacles, gardens, planters, fountains and other urban design amenities. Because it is not cost feasible to have a different kind of light fixture, a different kind of bench and a different style of street furnishings for each and every downtown street, it will be necessary to develop standardized palettes that can be used when developing different streetscape applications throughout downtown.

**Street trees and planters:** Wherever possible, the planting of deciduous street trees should be encouraged. Street trees should be protected by decorative tree grates and tree guards, or be built in above-ground planters.

**Street vending:** Simple measures to promote and integrate small operations – such as vending kiosks and “hole-in-the-wall” retail – into the streetscape should be encouraged.

In all, pedestrians feel more welcomed on streets that incorporate as many of these features as possible. With the appropriate level of street improvements, many Downtown residents, workers, and

visitors might choose to walk – rather than drive – when moving from one place to another within and across the CBD. The result is a series of well-populated streets with a higher-than-normal level of amenity that, in turn, will encourage retail development, discourage crime, and enhance economic vitality because their physical and functional character gives each street an identity that lends its property owners some cache.

*Downtown Reforestation*

Incorporating trees into the fabric of Downtown East and the North Loop is absolutely critical for improving both the quality of life and property values in the Downtown urban environment. A healthy urban forest has direct environmental pay-offs by improving air quality and reducing storm water runoff. At the same time, an accumulated tree canopy that stretches down a city block, or across an entire neighborhood, provides seasonal benefits that make downtown streets and open spaces more comfortable and therefore more livable. Besides the obvious aesthetic impact of green plant life, a lush leaf canopy provides cooling affects that mitigate the radiant heat emitted from the hard surfaces that often make many sidewalks so unpleasant in the summer time. Likewise, in addition to the aesthetic quality of trunk and branch pattern against the winter sky, trees help to buffer pedestrians against strong winter winds (see Figures 5.10 through 5.12, pages 65-67).

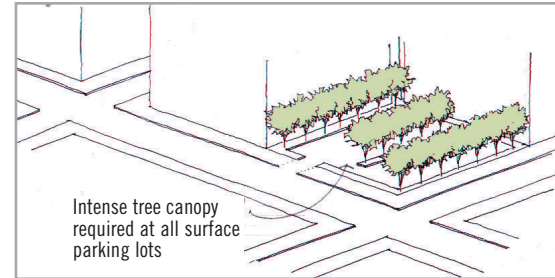
Planting deciduous trees makes more sense than planting coniferous trees. Besides their seasonal-ecological benefits, deciduous trees do not block important views into and out of street-level spaces, thus providing a safer street environment that is more attractive to retailers who want their store windows to be seen.

While there are a number of different kinds of deciduous trees that are tolerant of dense urban settings, no tree will thrive if it does not have healthy growing conditions. Creating healthy growing conditions for all downtown trees means that ample space

## CONDITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES



Parking lots offer an opportunity for reforestation through the application of an “orchard parking” concept.



While parking lots may be a fact of life for Downtown East and North Loop for some time, their appearance can be improved by using orchard parking techniques that provide shade and “humanize” the space until they evolve to another use.



Redevelopment or transformation of downtown surface parking lots will not happen overnight. In the meantime, the aesthetics of spaces like these need to be addressed if a true pedestrian orientation is desired for Downtown East and the North Loop.



Reforestation of some parking lots might take on the appearance of a garden – creating a place of value and human activity tucked between existing buildings.

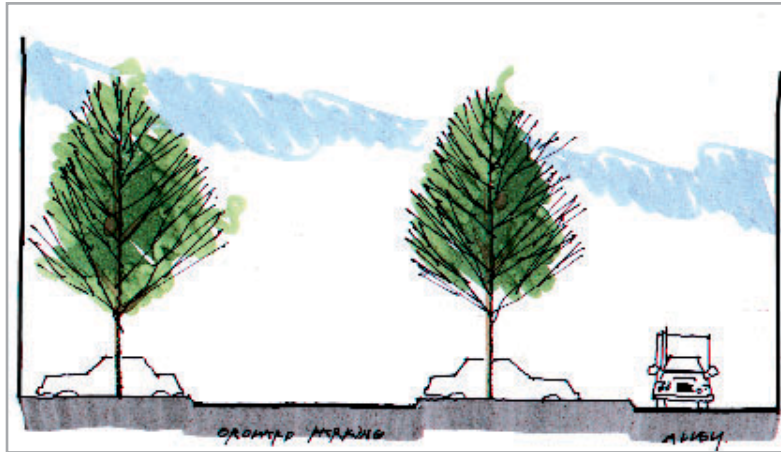


Trees add a sense of life and vitality to high-intensity neighborhoods by lending a greater sense of amenity and livability.

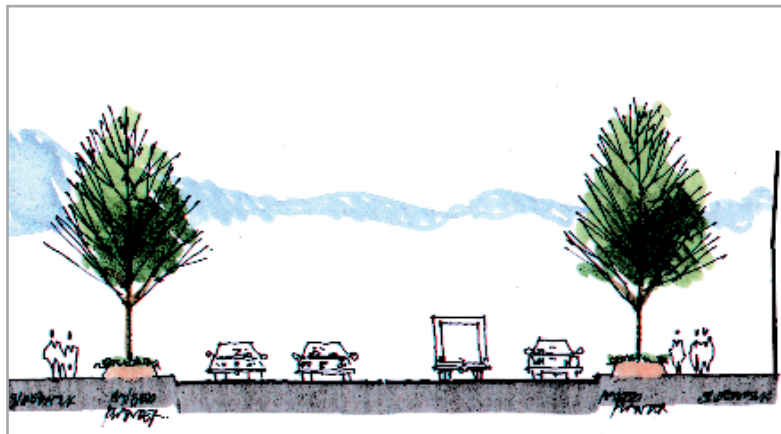


Wide sidewalks at key streets offer space for sidewalk cafes, additional landscaping and strolling.

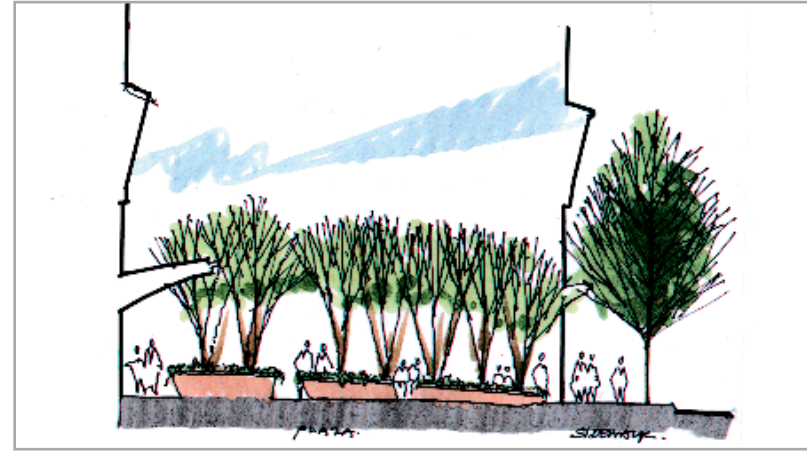
Figure 5.10 Examples of Reforestation

**ORCHARD PARKING**

Introduction of significant tree plantings in surface parking lots yields environmental benefits, aesthetic enhancements and humanizing character.

**STREET TREES – RAISED PLANTERS**

Heavier trafficked streets may merit the introduction of raised planters for trees, which offer an additional sense of protection for pedestrians, provide a better growing environment for trees, and avoid below grade obstructions.

**PLAZA**

Spaces marking entries to significant buildings in downtown are an opportunity to create green retreats for downtown residents, workers and visitors.

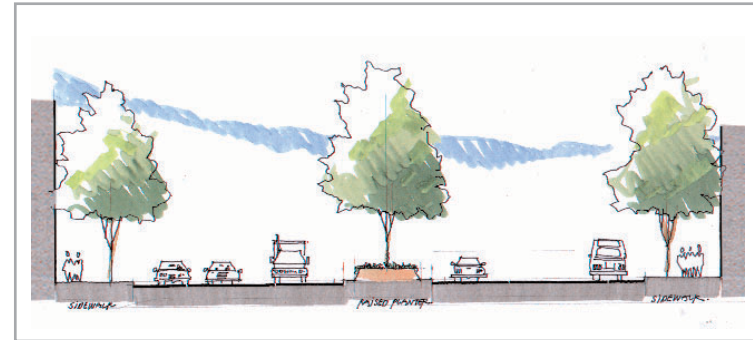
**GREEN ALLEY**

While the space is not expansive in width, tree plantings in alleys offer an opportunity to create a connected urban forest of some magnitude in Downtown East and the North Loop.

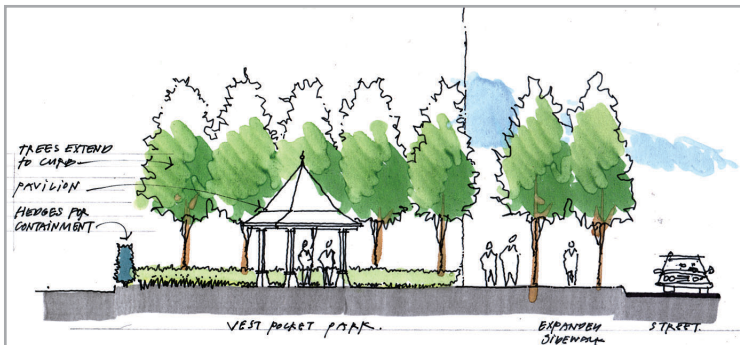
Figure 5.11 Reforestation: Sample Solutions 1

**STREET TREES**

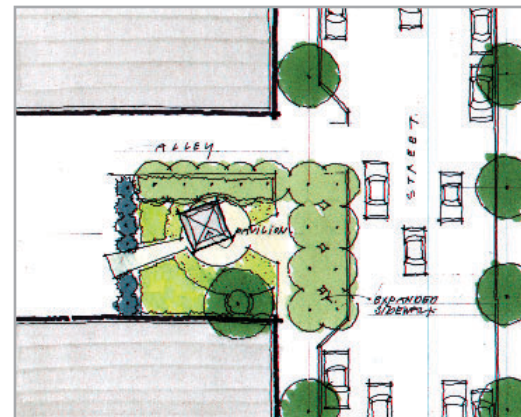
Most commonly, the urban forest occurs with extensive street tree plantings, where their presence is most appreciated by pedestrians.

**STREET TREES IN MEDIAN PLANTERS**

Medians are difficult environments for tree growth, but the introduction of a raised planter provides a better chance for trees to reach maturity and actually contribute to the character of an urban place.

**POCKET PARK**

Essential qualities of a pocket park include their small scale and pedestrian orientation, a sense of containment and canopy, an extension to the street, and, in most cases, a signature element.

**POCKET PARK – AERIAL**

Small remnant spaces, too small to build upon, can add value as small open spaces designed as more garden-like refuges with trees, grass, shrubs and even artful pavilions or public art.

Figure 5.12 Reforestation: Sample Solutions 2

### *Policies for Streetscapes, Open Space, and Reforestation*

- *Establish significant public spaces in Downtown East and North Loop, especially where they are proximate to the places where people live or work.*
- *Design public spaces and private plazas to encourage their use and to place a strong emphasis on the creation of “green” in these new spaces. Open spaces should connect directly to city streets and they should be well-integrated into the public domain.*
- *Consider establishing an open space standard and instituting a development impact fee for creating new downtown parks in the Project Area.*
- *Sidewalks should be built to a minimum width of 12 feet to promote a comfortable scale and to create opportunities to enhance sidewalk activity. In locations where plantings or sidewalk cafes are intended, a minimum sidewalk width of 18 feet should be maintained. A minimum width of 10 feet should be adopted for zones of “pedestrian-clear” space.*
- *Establish continuous zones on the outer edges of downtown sidewalks where functional hardware (such as*

must be provided for them to grow. In addition, providing for their on-going perpetual care and maintenance is critical to maximizing the benefits derived from making the investment in planting trees. Wherever possible, irrigation systems should be built into tree planters or downtown parks and plazas to ensure that consistent, strategic watering is possible – especially in times of drought or deluge.

### **CASE STUDIES FOR STRATEGIC URBAN DESIGN PROJECTS**

Bringing the quality and character of the public realm in Downtown Minneapolis up to par with the economic vibrancy of the City will require major changes in the way business is done and the way people think of, and value the public realm around them. Change won’t happen overnight, but there are two projects that have the potential to make a dramatic difference in downtown in fairly short order and which might be relatively easy to implement in the near future. The first such project is the development of a streetscape along the downtown LRT corridor. The second project is a series of modifications to a small portion of Downtown East – the area around the Hennepin County Medical Center – that will help to better integrate an important institution into the “high-potential” of the surrounding neighborhood fabric.

#### **Case Study: 5th Street Streetscape**

The construction of new rail transit infrastructure in Downtown Minneapolis offers the opportunity to reshape the public realm and encourage the economic potential of downtown neighborhoods. 5th Street already is being transformed from a typical downtown street to one that has a new function – the central spine of downtown rail transit. Perhaps the best opportunity – one that offers maximum potential for a relatively small investment – is to establish a clear pedestrian link that enhances the character of the LRT corridor through the installation of a consistent streetscape along the length of the 5th Street. This streetscape would stretch from the Downtown East Station at the

Metrodome to the site of the new Multi-Modal Station and Ballpark in the North Loop (see Figures 5.13 and 5.14, pages 69-70).

A unified 5th Street streetscape has several important benefits, all of which are grounded in opportunities to enhance the economic vitality of the entire CBD. First, a unified streetscape would create an easily identifiable “front door” to the city, which in turn would give properties that have an address along 5th Street a certain cache. As such, inserting a streetscape becomes a major economic development tool that would help the city to encourage transit-oriented development around new and future station sites (see Figure 5.15, page 71, and figures 5.16 through 5.18, pages 73-75).

Second, a unified streetscape along 5th Street would help tie the outer neighborhoods of the CBD more closely into the commercial core. It would help integrate new development into the existing fabric of Downtown in order to encourage a diversity of uses and activities. Such diversity will at once complement existing Downtown development while also creating opportunities to expand the times of the day and week in which various parts of Downtown are active, alive, and vital. For example, because so much of Downtown’s activity is already oriented in a north-south direction on streets, such as Hennepin Avenue, Nicollet Mall and Marquette Avenue, tying neighborhoods together in a strong east-west connection is more than just a nice idea. It is critical to ensuring that consumers are able to walk between important places such as the Metrodome and the eating and drinking establishments of the Warehouse District, or the Theatre District on Hennepin Avenue and the new Mill City Museum or the new Guthrie Theatre in the Mills District.

#### *Integrated Improvements*

In order to create a well-used, engaging environment along 5th Street, it will be necessary to integrate a whole palette of street finishes, furnishings, and operational “hardware” into a consistent streetscape. This includes street lighting, pedestrian light-

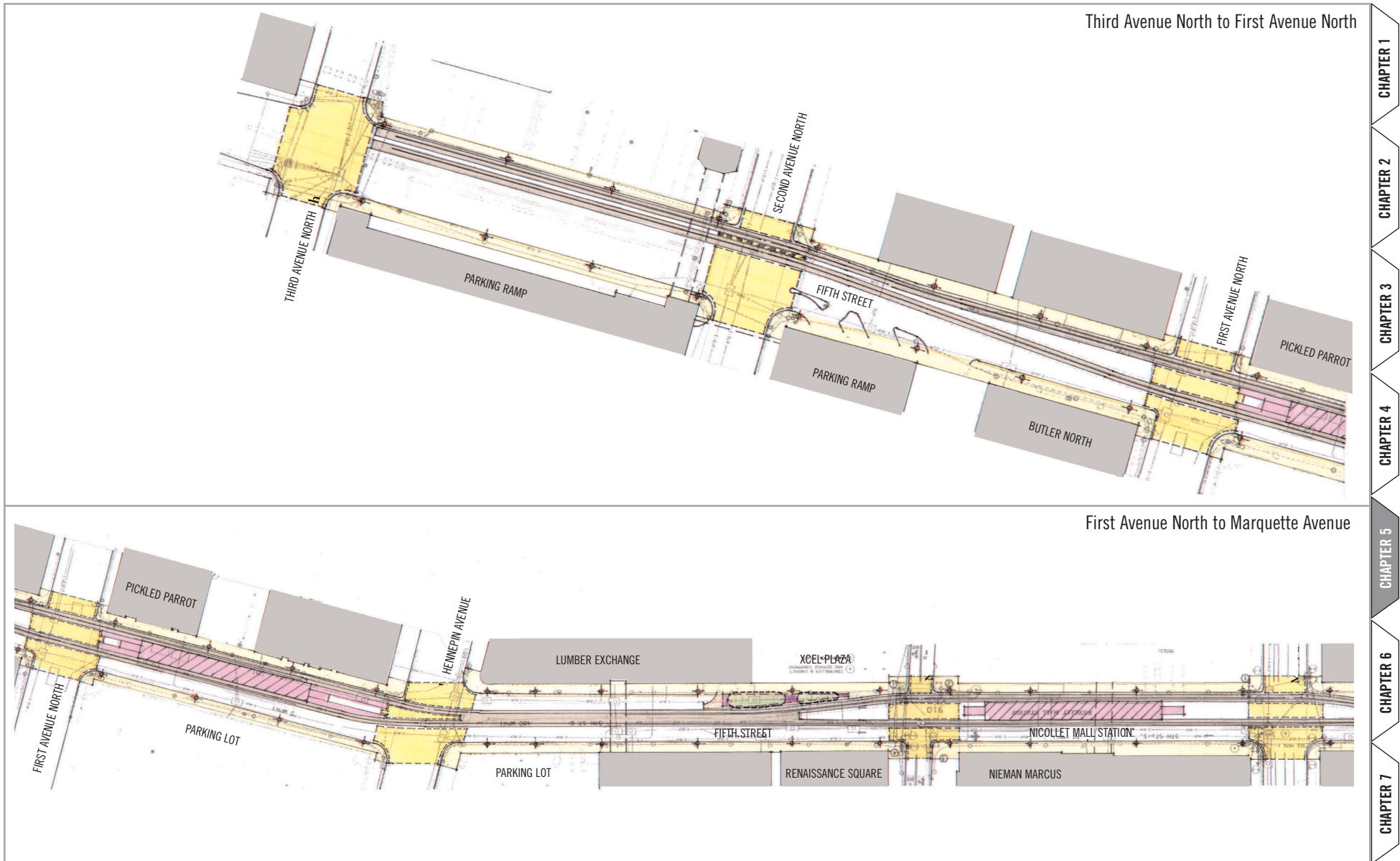


Figure 5.13 5th Street Streetscape: Block Configurations 1

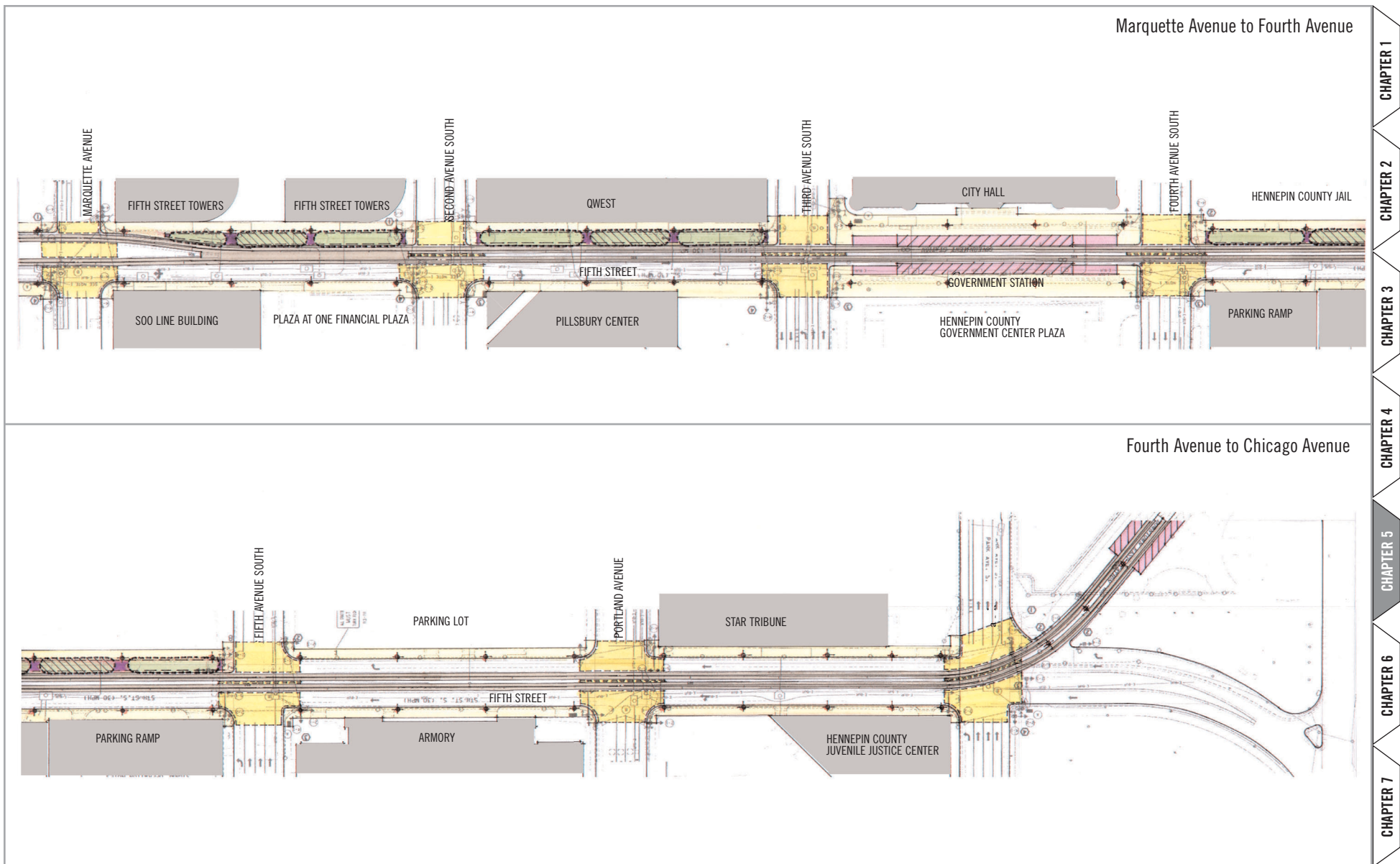


Figure 5.14 5th Street Streetscape: Block Configurations 2



Figure 5.15 5th Street Streetscape: View Looking east from Government Station toward Metrodome Plaza

*Policies Continued*

*streetlights, signage and parking meters) are located in manner that is as uniform as possible.*

- *Wherever possible, establish continuous zones on the inner or outer edges of downtown sidewalks for street furnishings, planters, public art, and other amenities.*
- *Streetscape treatments should be incorporated into the length of all Primary Pedestrian Movement Corridors to form consistent connections between significant destinations and features.*
- *In the near term, the 5th Street streetscape should be incorporated into the LRT Corridor to forge the major east/west pedestrian connection within Downtown Minneapolis. Streetscape enhancements articulated in the 5th Street Streetscape (see page 71) should be implemented as soon as possible.*
- *Extensive tree planting should be promoted in all public and private development projects throughout the Project Area.*
- *Use trees for their aesthetic and ecological benefits: improvement of air*

ing, sidewalk treatments, intersection and crosswalk treatments, street furnishings, landscaping, and public art (see Figures 5.16 through 5.18, pages 73-75).

**Street lighting:** Integration of the hardware for the LRT's Overhead Catenary System (OCS) with new city street lights onto a single joint use pole has already been accomplished through an agreement by the Metropolitan Council, the Hiawatha Project Office (HPO), and the City of Minneapolis. Combining these two functions into a single shared unit will dramatically reduce the feeling of clutter that would otherwise result from too many utility poles in a tight urban space. For the most part, joint use poles will be located in a consistent manner along the length of the corridor allowing for good sightlines from one end of 5th Street to the other. In the course of public meetings for this master plan, the general public voted on a light silver metallic finish for joint use poles.

**Pedestrian Lighting:** At the request of the City of Minneapolis, joint use poles that are being installed as part of the LRT construction project are able to be retrofitted in the future to incorporate pedestrian scaled street lighting along the length of 5th Street. Prior to making any modifications to the joint use poles, the City and other stakeholders should contemplate the need and value of adding freestanding pedestrian-scaled lighting in the interstitial areas between joint use poles.

**Sidewalk treatments:** Most existing sidewalks along the length of the corridor should be rebuilt to uniform standards, with uniform materials. The City and HPO already have established locations for the placement of joint use poles. In most cases, these locations reinforce a consistent zone of "pedestrian-clear" walking space between the face of each pole and the face of the adjacent building. In those portions of the core that already have a decorative sidewalk installed, special efforts will need to be made to ensure that pedestrians have visual clues that lend an overall consistency to the "floor" of the corridor.

**Intersection and crosswalk treatments:** The intersections where 5th Street crosses other downtown streets are important places for pedestrians to orient themselves and make choices about moving around within the city. To the extent possible, intersections should stand out from the length of blocks to indicate the presence of cross traffic. Ideally, each intersection would be built in concrete. At the very least, a special paint pattern should be used to make crosswalks easily identifiable for pedestrians, motorists, and LRT operators alike.

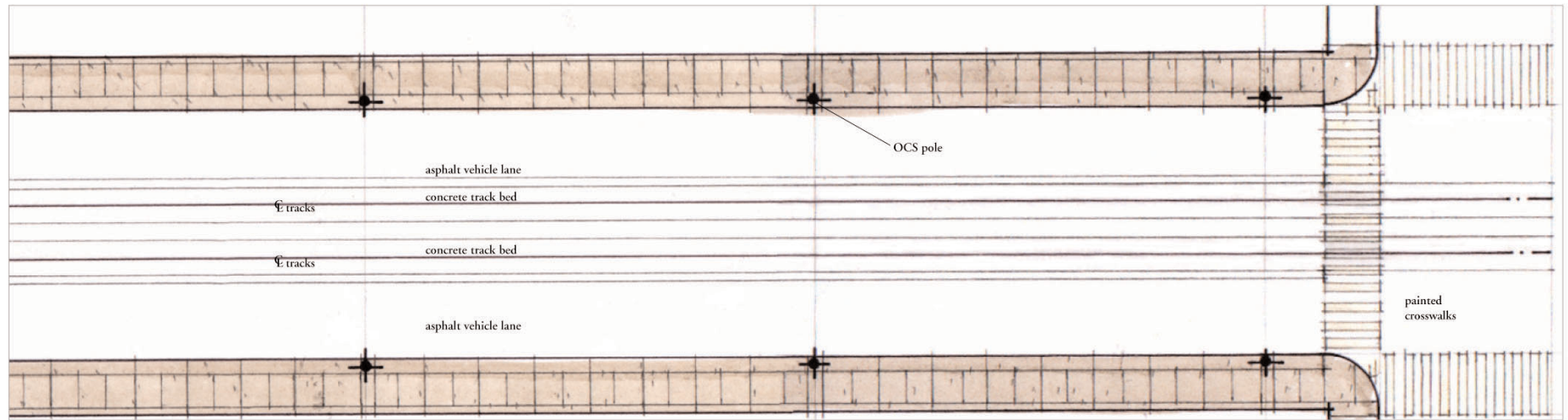
**Street furniture:** In order to make the LRT corridor user-friendly for transit patrons, bicyclists, and downtown pedestrians alike, it will be necessary to install a consistent collection of street furnishings, such as benches, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, and bicycle lockers, throughout the corridor.

The length of 5th Street should contain ample public seating so the space may be fully used and enjoyed by the greatest number of people. Seating areas should be designed to be more than just pretty; they must be inviting and useable as well. (Well-used public spaces are far safer than those that are aesthetically handsome but send the subliminal signal that users are unwelcome). As in any city park, all public seating should have seatbacks, making the benches a comfortable place to spend time. Nuisance loiterers should be dissuaded through design that encourages crowds of users; rather than by inserting poor design features that discourage the use and enjoyment of the corridor by a broad cross-section of the general public.

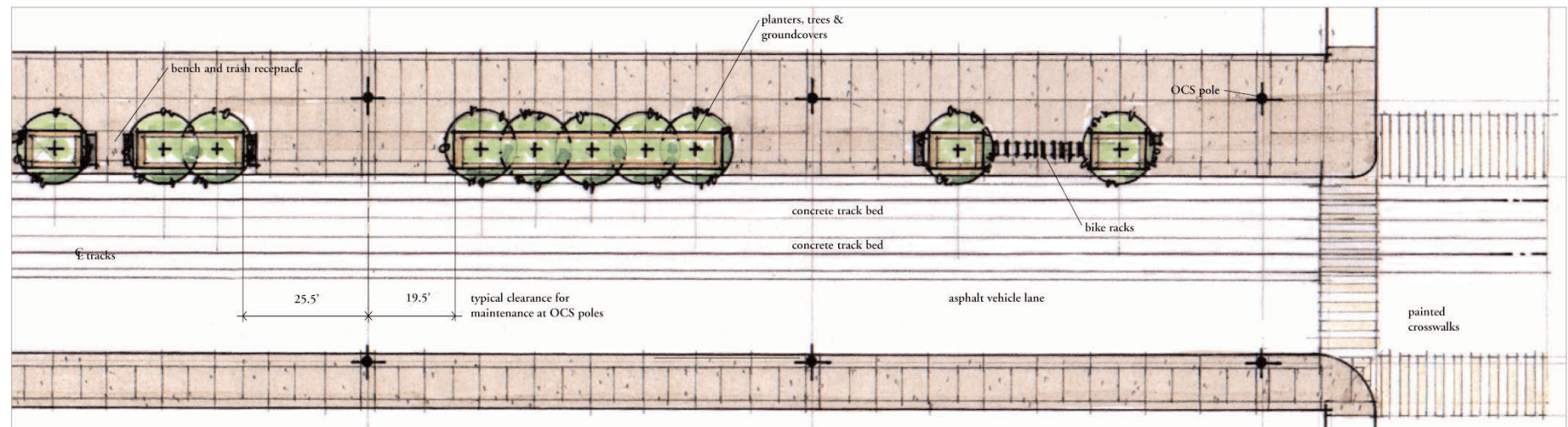
**Landscaping zones and extended sidewalks:** The relationship between existing buildings and the existing right-of-way on 5th Street creates several stretches where sidewalks are narrow and less than optimal. Nevertheless, in several locations the layout of LRT tracks along the corridor has created leftover spaces between the new curb face and the front of existing buildings. Because these "extended sidewalks" are as much as twenty feet wide in some places, they offer an excellent opportunity to soften the



Figure 5.16 5th Street Streetscape: Proposed Street Furniture

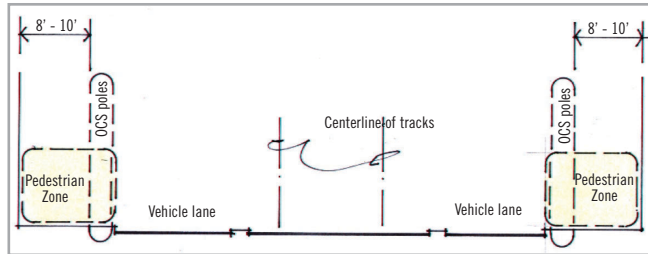


Standard plan with two vehicular lanes

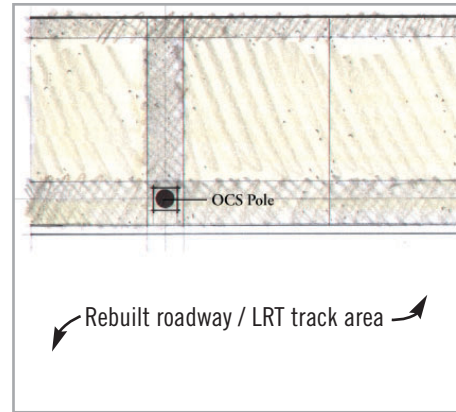


Standard plan with one vehicular lane and expanded sidewalk

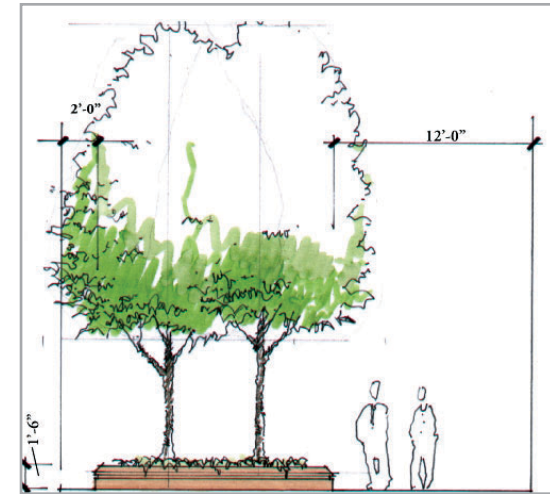
Figure 5.17 5th Street Streetscape: Typical Sidewalk Plans



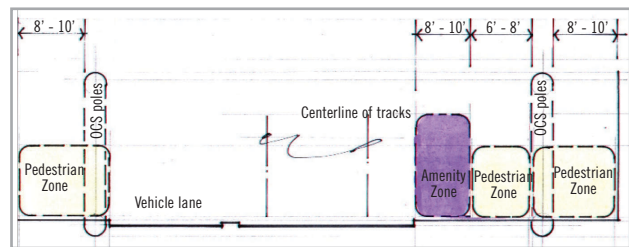
Standard cross section with two vehicular lanes



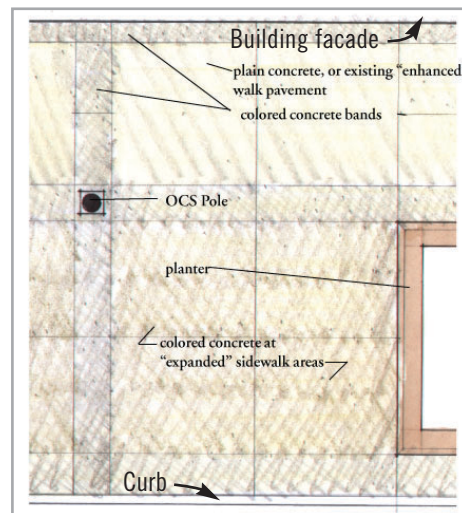
Plan view at standard sidewalk condition in 5th Street corridor.



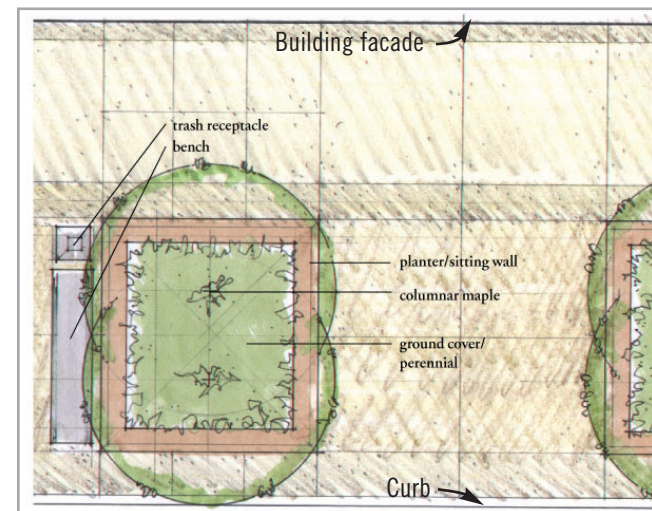
Elevation of typical raised planter located in "extended" sidewalk



Standard cross section with one vehicular lane and expanded sidewalk



Plan view at new "extended" sidewalk on 5th Street



Plan view of typical raised planter located in "extended" sidewalk

Figure 5.18 5th Street Streetscape: Typical Sidewalk Details

*Policies Continued*

*quality, reduction of storm water runoff, cooling in the summertime, and the buffering of winter winds.*

- *Plant deciduous trees rather than coniferous trees, for reasons of safety and shade; consider the use of “Tivoli” string lighting on key streets, vest pocket parks, and in “orchard parking lots.”*
- *Consider the form of the space that will be created by trees. Use them to create “urban rooms,” so that the combination of trees and buildings will help to create special places for people to interact.*

character of the street by integrating new planters and landscaping. Extended sidewalks zones are possible on the north side of 5th Street between Marquette and Third Avenues South and between Fourth and Fifth Avenues South. Ideally, a long term solution for 5th Street would include removing the vehicular lane north of the LRT tracks between Park Avenue and Fifth Avenue South and rebuilding these lanes as extended sidewalks / landscaping zones. This would allow for an unbroken ribbon of green extending from the Metrodome to the heart of the Downtown Core.

All planters will need to be strategically placed and sized so that they do not interfere with the maintenance of the overhead catenary system and the joint use poles. Likewise planters will need to be placed in close proximity to, but outside of the pedestrian-clear zones of walking space. Planters should be raised and irrigated to give trees and other plants the best possible chance of thriving.

**Public Art:** The City should continue to formalize policies and procedures to ensure that public art is incorporated into all infrastructure projects throughout the Project Area, specifically the 5th Street Streetscape.

*Challenges to incorporation of the 5th Street Streetscape*

In 1999, a conceptual streetscape design for 5th Street had been designed in conjunction with MnDOT’s Aesthetic Design Committee for the Hiawatha Line. However, in the Spring of 2000, prior to the full funding agreement from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), MnDOT determined that it was no longer possible – from a budgetary standpoint – to include any provisions for a streetscape along the LRT corridor. They determined that any enhancements to 5th Street would be left up to the City.

Although it clearly made sense to pursue the improvement of public areas along 5th Street in conjunction with the construction of the LRT line, integrating a streetscape project into the reconstruc-

tion of the 5th Street roadway was impossible due to budgetary concerns and the restrictive timeline imposed by the LRT project. In the meantime, in its dealings with the Hiawatha Project Office (HPO), City staff were successful in ensuring that the integration of LRT onto 5th Street was done in a deliberate, consistent manner so that it would serve as a unified background for a future streetscape. For example, a great deal of City staff time and energy was put into making sure that joint-use poles are installed to support street lights, traffic signals, and LRT wires rather than multiple individual-purpose poles in the corridor. These poles also have the ability to support banners and pedestrian level lighting at a future date.

*Potential Funding Sources*

If the full design concept for the streetscape is to become a reality, additional treatments will likely need to be incorporated at a later date when sufficient funding is found through one or more potential funding scenarios:

**Intergovernmental Coalition:** While the urgency of completing construction of the actual rail line on 5th Street superceded the ability to simultaneously construct a streetscape, making the most of 5th Street has benefits that extend beyond just the local environment. If the LRT system is to be truly successful, integrating the downtown pedestrian circulation system into the LRT system is critical for attracting new converts to rail transit, encouraging new business activity, and strengthening property values in the Project Area. Because improvements to the surrounding pedestrian realm are in the interest of the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, and the Metropolitan Council, a joint effort by a coalition of intergovernmental partners may be more likely to get off the ground than if such an effort is left to one governmental entity alone.

**Public-Private Partnership:** While local and regional governments clearly have a stake in the success of the light rail system, private

property owners, property managers and developers clearly stand to benefit from the integration of LRT into Downtown Minneapolis. A streetscape that unifies 5th Street and gives it character will help to maximize foot traffic in and around nearby properties by forging better connections to them. Better access, a higher level of convenience for commuters, and a more pleasant environment along the corridor will translate into a more competitive leasing market and higher rents for downtown commercial spaces. As such, the Downtown Council, the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), the East Downtown Council, the Warehouse District Business Association and the North Loop Business Association all need to be at the table in working with a coalition of intergovernmental partners.

*Property Assessments:* A traditional way to fund street improvement projects is for property owners to band together and work with local government to design and construct necessary changes. The cost of the project – for either construction, maintenance, or both – is then charged back to property owners in the form of assessments against their property. However, in the case of 5th Street, the relatively large differences in the value of properties in Downtown East and the North Loop – as compared to those within the Downtown Core – presents special challenges for determining how assessments should be levied in a way that is justly proportional. No doubt, the existing imbalance in land values along 5th Street will even out somewhat once the LRT line is in full operation. Nevertheless, dramatic differences between fully developed parcels and those that have been speculatively held as surface parking lots will need to be accounted for.

*Development Fees:* One option that the City of Minneapolis might pursue is to levy a development fee on all new projects within a given geographic area – either along the corridor, within a three block distance of 5th Street, or throughout the CBD. This option has its own challenges in weighing the relative benefits of waiting to build a streetscape on 5th Street until enough new development occurs, versus fronting money to build a streetscape and charging

the costs back to property owners after the fact. In either case, a balance will have to be struck since construction of a streetscape should in no way hinder developer interest or the ability to “make a go of it” within the LRT corridor.

*Miscellaneous Sources:* On the assumption that a source can be settled upon for capital construction of the 5th Street Streetscape, the City might consider “leasing” sidewalk space to street vendors and dedicate this rent to ongoing maintenance of the streetscape amenities. Likewise, to the extent that the City wants to set up sheltered kiosks at or nearby LRT stations, additional revenues might be possible since these are good locations for newsstands, florists, and convenience retail. Alternatively, revenue raised by selling advertising on LRT vehicles or at LRT stations might also be used to fund maintenance of the surrounding streetscape.

### Case Study: Revising the Physical Impact of Megastructures in Downtown East

The urban landscape in Downtown East (and in the northern reaches of Elliot Park) is overwhelmingly dominated by three features: Large expanses of surface parking, the Hubert Humphrey Metrodome, and the Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC).

As an institution and as a “campus” within Downtown Minneapolis, HCMC was formed through a series of hospital consolidations in the 1960s and 1970s, and through a series of property acquisitions (of former hospitals) in the early 1990s. Though the HCMC campus is comprised of a diverse collection of buildings, many people equate the presence of the institution in Downtown with the centerpiece of their physical plant – an enormous megastructure that spans four city blocks (see Figures 5.19 and 5.20, pages 78-79). When this building was built in the early 1970s, megastructures were considered an inventive architectural solution to the challenge of building large institutional or commercial complexes within the heart of U.S. cities. Most U.S. cities have at least one of two examples of this kind of architecture within their downtowns.

GOAL: Creation of more humane spaces surrounding the Metrodome and HCMC, resulting in a more definitive "district," greater pedestrian comfort and activation of the public realm.

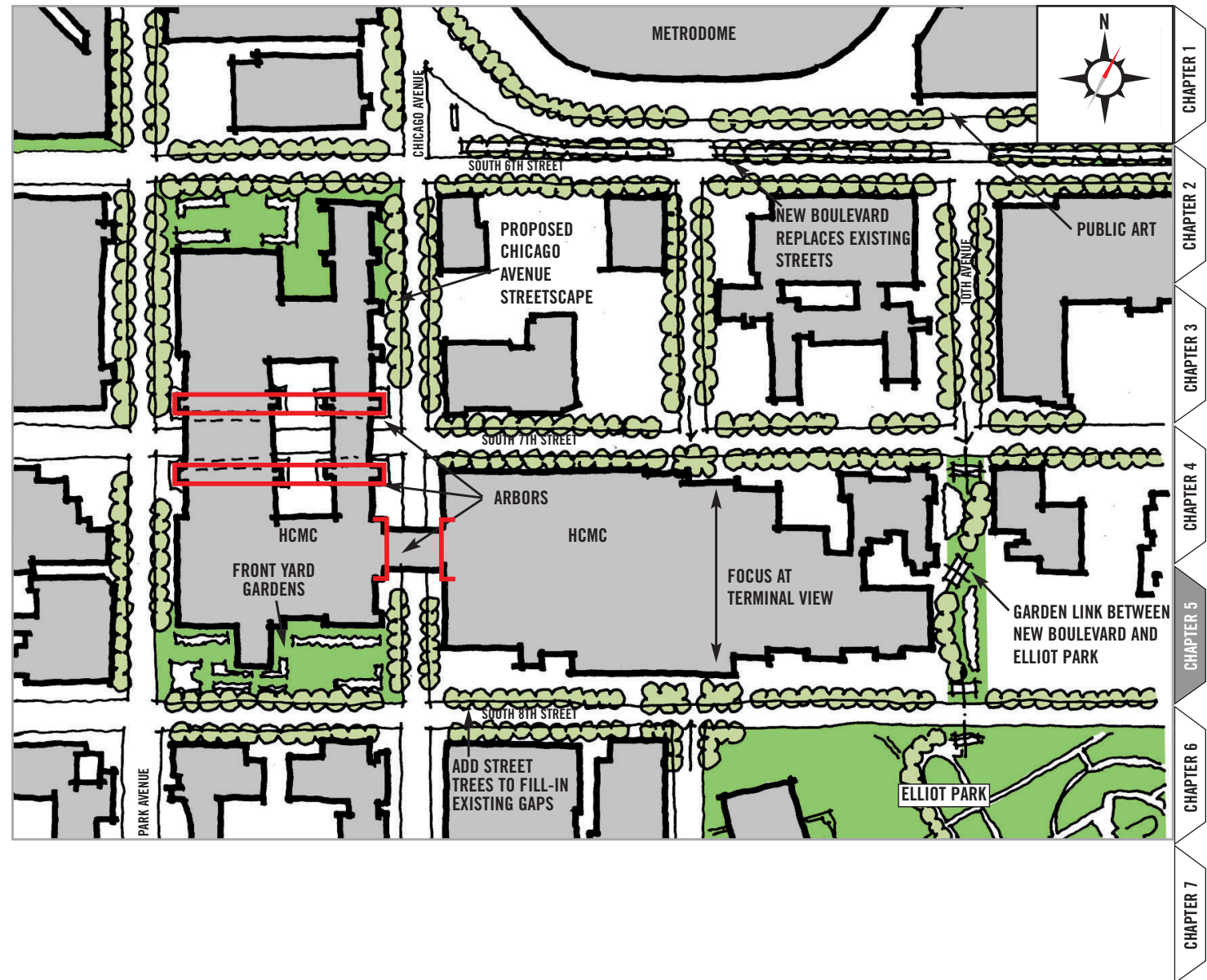


Figure 5.19 Revising the Physical Impact of Local Megastructures – Plan

## EXISTING CONDITIONS



Though megastructures were once considered a logical solution for incorporating large institutions into downtowns with small-sized blocks, this form of architecture presents long term problems for generating streetlife in and around the districts where they are located. For example, HCMC structures that bridge streets create uncomfortable spaces for pedestrians and present a “wall” that discourages a sense of connectedness in Downtown East.

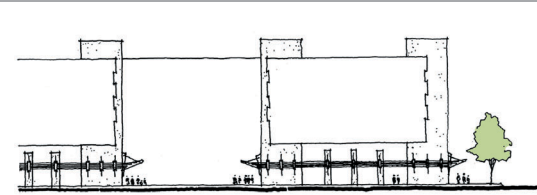


Despite being a major generator of downtown pedestrian traffic, the lack of human-scaled architectural detailing and the monolithic character of HCMC's main building deters people from activating the public realm in and around the HCMC campus. Opaque windows and the lack of distinctive streetscaping only compound the problem

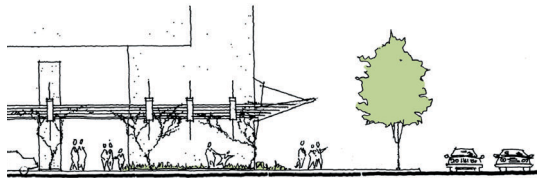


While the Metrodome and HCMC generate a great deal of pedestrian traffic, the character and utility of sidewalks in this area is less than optimal. The existing combined roadway between the Metrodome and HCMC feels more like a racetrack than a city street because it encourages high traffic speeds. A concrete divider in the street discourages the large numbers of visitors coming to this part of Downtown from using city sidewalks to connect to nearby businesses in Elliot Park, the Downtown core, and the Warehouse District. Such businesses are

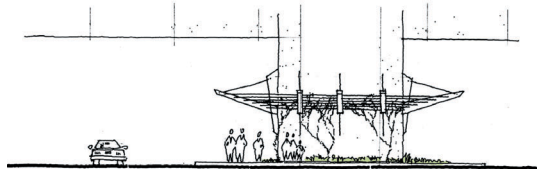
## PROPOSED SOLUTIONS



“Arbors” link building columns and offer a more humane canopy to spaces under the building.



Vines and ground plantings “soften” the building at the points where they touch the ground.



“Arbors” wrap the concrete column entirely.



A planted median complements boulevard plantings on the south side of the Metrodome.

not that far away in actual distance, but for many they seem miles away because of the inhospitable pedestrian conditions.

Street-level passages that seem to tunnel under HCMC's main building can be made more inviting by introducing relatively inexpensive elements such as arbors with shade-loving plants. In addition to providing a more humane cover with the benefits of new greenery, incorporating arbors would also add much needed architectural detailing that would help give these buildings a more human scale.

Removal of concrete barriers and chain link fence, reducing the driving lane widths to calm traffic, and inserting a raised and planted median will provide a more welcoming entry to Downtown from the east and offer a greater sense of connectedness between Downtown East, Elliot Park, and the Downtown Core.

Figure 5.20 Revising the Physical Impact of Local Megastructures – Detail

### *Policies for Revising the Physical Impact of Megastructures In Downtown East*

- *Establish a streetscape zone that relates specifically to HCMC and the Metrodome so the district becomes more identifiable in downtown. This district should be bounded by South 6th Street on the north, Tenth Avenue South on the east, South 8th Street on the south, and Park Avenue on the west.*
- *Reduce the perceived orientation toward vehicles by reducing street widths and thereby calming traffic. This is especially important along the south side of the Metrodome where typical speeds are not fitting for the neighborhood.*
- *Establish a more welcoming entry to the district and to Downtown by replacing the concrete j-barriers and chain link fence that currently divide South 5th Street and South 6th Street along the south side of the Metrodome. Create a new boulevard that combines both roadways, incorporates new raised and planted medians, and builds on the existing tree canopy / streetscape currently in place on the south side of the Metrodome.*
- *Increase the sidewalk area in and*

Although there is no question about the importance of HCMC being located downtown, the overpowering architecture of HCMC's main building presents a number of challenges for creating and recreating new pedestrian-scaled, mixed use neighborhoods on the edges of the HCMC campus. The irony is that while so many lives are being saved inside these walls, the exterior character of the megastructure does little to enhance the streetlife on its threshold. This is because the megastructure creates city "walls" that seriously disrupt the urban experience within this portion of Downtown.

The Metrodome stadium was built in the 1980s on a megablock created by merging six separate Downtown blocks into a single site used for the construction of a sport stadium and an adjacent, undersized parking structure. In conjunction with its "next door neighbor," HCMC, the scale and detail of these megastructures severely degrades the Downtown East pedestrian environment. Furthermore, the nature of their use is such that they create highly-localized islands of intense pedestrian activity that often seem disconnected from the rest of Downtown, thus discouraging pedestrian connections through the area.

That being the case, efforts should be made to better weave these buildings and their surrounding areas into the downtown fabric. The creation of more humane public spaces and streetscapes surrounding these buildings would result in a more definitive "district" that provides a greater sense of comfort for pedestrians. Likewise, by forging better connections through these "walls" and enhancing the district with more recognizable pedestrian amenities, it will be possible to create strong links north and south between Elliot Park and the Central Riverfront, and stronger links east and west between Elliot Park and the Downtown Core. Improving these connections – and overcoming the feeling that these buildings are barriers as opposed to gateways – is absolutely critical to forging revitalization in the Elliot Park East and Elliot Park West precincts (see Figure 4.1, page 33).

Undertaking these efforts will need to be done jointly by Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission, as the property owners, and the City of Minneapolis, due to its interest in forging Complete Communities. Obviously business, neighborhood, and resident groups in Downtown East and Elliot Park will need to be an important voice in moving any such effort forward.

*Policies Continued*

*around the HCMC zone to create more space for streetscape enhancements, especially in areas where building walls are monolithic and lack pedestrian-scaled detail.*

- *Decking over freeway entry/exit trenches on the northeast corner of the Metrodome site would allow for the creation of a new public open space on the north side of the stadium.*
- *Focus on the creation of human-scaled elements and spaces (public art, fountains, or gardens) around HCMC and the Metrodome in an effort to balance the institutional qualities of the hospital buildings and the overwhelming scale of the stadium.*
- *Consider replacing reflective or opaque glass at HCMC's office and lobby areas with transparent glass to encourage a relationship between interior and exterior activities.*

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING GATEWAYS AND VIEW CORRIDORS**

The quality of the public realm in Downtown Minneapolis – its livability and economic vitality – could be greatly improved by taking the opportunity to adopt a series of measures aimed at enhancing the visual scope of the city. The visual scope of the city is that set of qualities which increases the range and penetration of vision through and within the built environment, either actually or symbolically. Enhancing the visual scope of the city includes taking note of and making the most of what already exists in the landscape but needs further articulation – broad vistas and panoramas, markers that punctuate the end of a long linear path through the city, and transitional zones between districts and neighborhoods that have their own distinct qualities. Future development that deliberately frames existing views, or makes the most of an otherwise unmarked gateway, will make the city easier to “read” and more accessible. In doing so, it will encourage greater interaction between the various districts of Downtown.

**Gateways**

Even as a series of new or revitalized Complete Communities in Downtown East and the North Loop should possess distinct individual identities, they should also complement Downtown as a whole by serving as thresholds or transition zones between different parts of the CBD. The designation of select locations as gateway sites will help build a sense of place for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists as they enter the Project Area.

How various parts of Downtown are experienced should be reinforced and enhanced by the ways in which the entries to Downtown are marked.

There are three types of gateways that should be taken into full consideration as new development occurs in Downtown Minneapolis:

- Type A: Gateways into Downtown East and the North Loop;
- Type B: Lighted Gateway Spires;
- Type C: Districts that serve as transitional spaces between different parts of Downtown.

A series of maps and photographs highlight key gateway locations and zones in and around the Project Area (see Figures 5.21 through 5.28, pages 82-89).

**View Corridors**

View Corridors are linear perspectives that penetrate though the built environment. In most cases, they are punctuated at the end by a downtown landmark. They are important because they provide a larger sense of how the city is organized. They also serve the practical function of orienting people and giving them a sense of scale within the urban landscape. For instance, the Downtown street grid has a very prominent shift along Hennepin Avenue. The edges of the entire CBD are also characterized by a series of dramatic shifts to the street grids in the neighborhoods surrounding Downtown. The result is a promising – but largely under-appreciated – set of opportunities to preserve and enhance the special qualities already inherent in the local landscape; qualities that could easily be lost by failing to take them into account.

There are three types of view corridors that should be taken into full consideration with each new development project in Downtown Minneapolis:

- Type 1: Gateway Views to Downtown Landmarks;
- Type 2: Enhancing Existing View Corridors;
- Type 3: Enhancing Existing View Corridors to Hennepin Avenue.

A series of maps and photographs highlight key vantage points in the Project Area (see Figures 5.29 through 5.34, pages 90-95).

## LEGEND



## GATEWAYS

- A1 – Hennepin Avenue at Mississippi River
- A2 – 3rd Avenue at Mississippi River
- A3 – Intersection of 11th Avenue South and South 8th Street
- A4 – Intersection of Chicago Avenue, Centennial Place and South 9th Street
- A5 – Intersection of 5th Avenue South and South 10th Street
- A6 – Hennepin Avenue at South 10th Street
- A7 – Olson Memorial Highway / 6th Avenue North at North 7th Street
- A8 – Washington Avenue North at 8th Avenue North
- A9 – 4th Avenue North at West River Road
- A10 – Washington Avenue at I-394
- A11 – Washington Avenue South at 12th Avenue South

Creation of gateways to serve as points of entry to downtown and “spires” to aid in navigation and orientation in Downtown East and the North Loop

## Concept: Defining points of entry

A1 Hennepin Avenue from the Mississippi River to Washington Avenue: Further enhancements will strengthen connection between the central riverfront and the Downtown Core.



A2 Third Avenue South from the Mississippi River to Washington Avenue: Further enhancements will strengthen connection between the central riverfront and the Downtown Core.

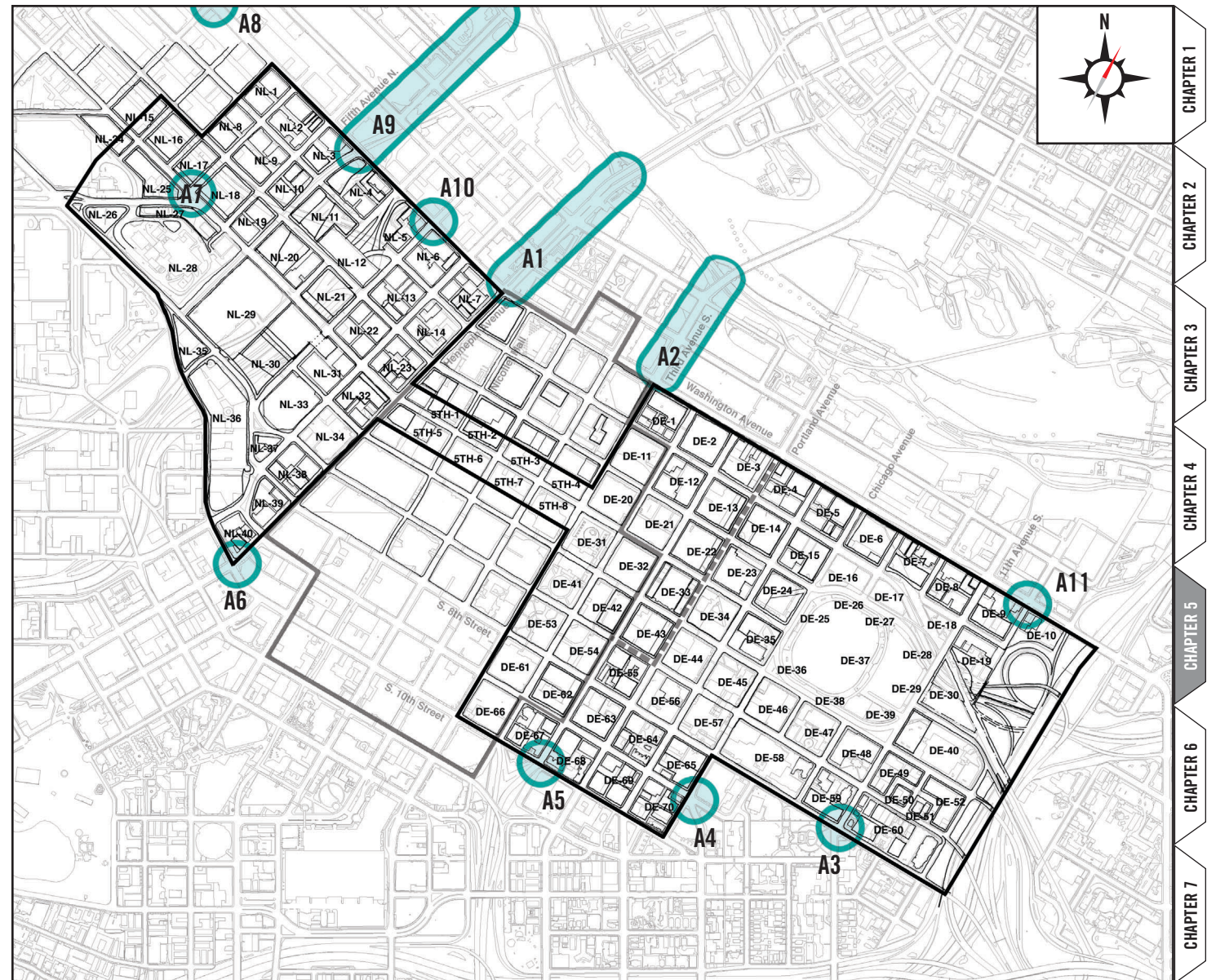


Figure 5.21 Map of Gateways into Downtown East and the North Loop



**A3** Intersection at Eleventh Avenue South, South 8th Street near East 14th Street (at grid shift).



**A4** Intersection of Chicago Avenue, Centennial Place and South 9th Street (at grid shift).



**A5** Intersection of Fifth Avenue South and South 10th Street where I-35W enters Downtown.



**A6** The bend in Hennepin Avenue at the intersection of 10th and Hennepin (Skyline view of core opens to the north and east).



**A7** Intersection at Olson Memorial Highway/Sixth Avenue North at North 7th Street (high spot looking over North Loop).



**A8** Intersection of Washington Avenue North and Eighth Avenue North.



**A9** Fourth Ave. N. from W. River Road and N. 2nd St. leading to potential greenway and air rights development over Burlington Northern ROW.



**A10** Intersection of Washington Avenue North and I-394.

**Figure 5.22 Photos: Gateways into Downtown East and the North Loop**

## LEGEND



VIEW CORRIDORS



SPIRES

B1 – South 5th Street at Chicago Avenue

B2 – 5th Street at Hennepin Avenue

B3 – Multimodal Station

B4 – Burlington Northern Right-of-Way

Creation of gateways to serve as points of entry to downtown and “spires” to aid in navigation and orientation in Downtown East and the North Loop

**Concepts: Orienting and navigating between districts**

- Four strategically located light towers or spires are arranged along the LRT corridor to provide reference points that help pedestrians orient themselves and navigate between major points of interest in Downtown East, the North Loop, and the Downtown Core.

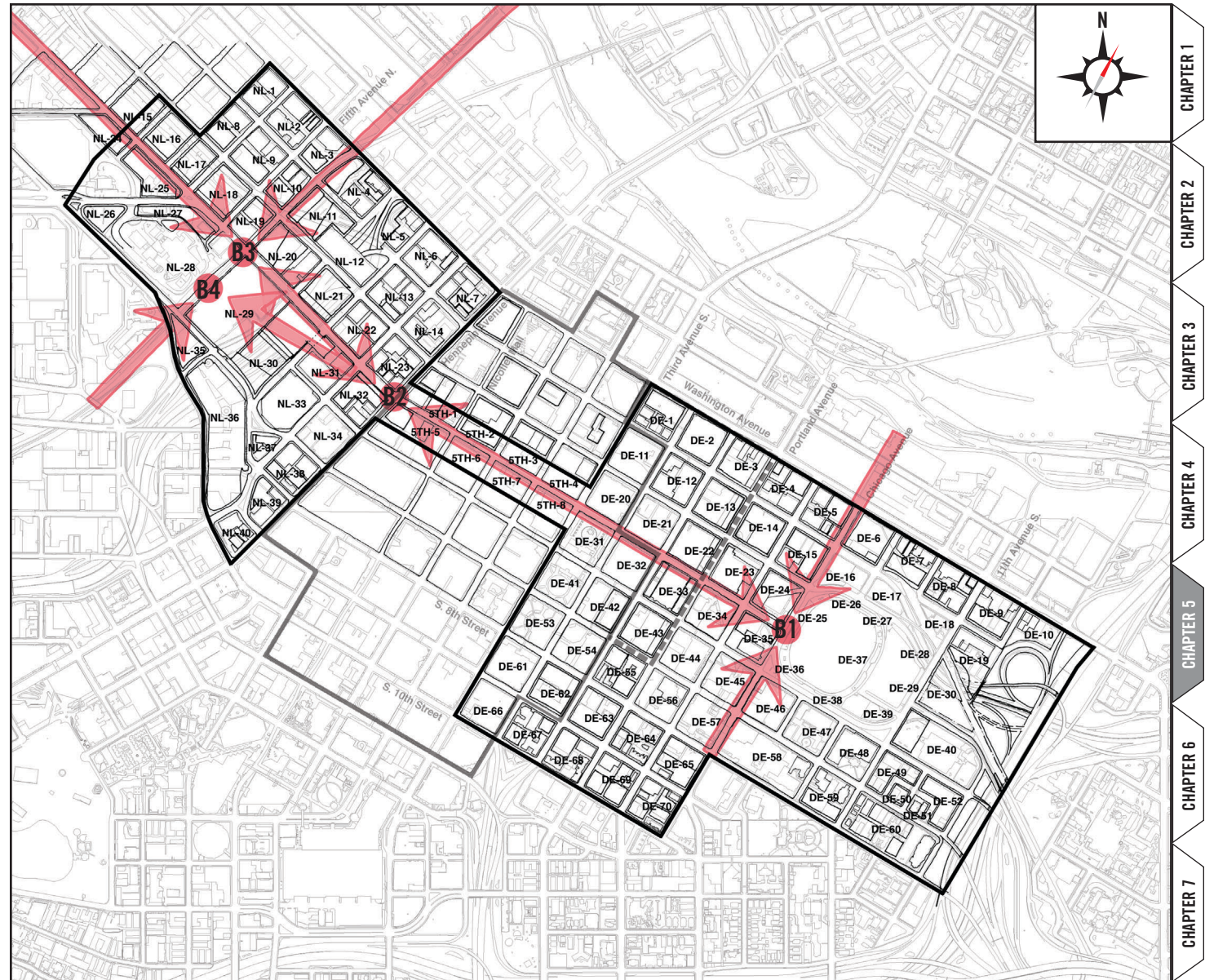


Figure 5.23 Map of Lighted Gateway Spires



**B1** Tower/spire strategically located in the southeast corner of the new Metrodome Plaza will help pedestrians locate the Metrodome and the LRT station:

- From the Warehouse District along the 5th Street LRT corridor
- From HCMC looking north up Chicago Avenue
- ◀ From the central riverfront in the Mills District outside of the new Guthrie Theatre and the Mill City Museum (as shown in the photo at left).



**B2** Tower/spire strategically located at 5th and Hennepin will help pedestrians locate the Warehouse District LRT Station:

- ◀ From the Metrodome along the 5th Street LRT corridor (as shown in the photo at left).
- From north and south along Hennepin Avenue.
- From the Multi-Modal Station, the Ballpark, and new neighborhoods in the North Loop located on the western reaches of North 5th Street (see Photo B3/B4, below).



**B3** One or two towers/spires strategically located in the vicinity of North 5th Street and Fifth Avenue North will help pedestrians locate the Multi-Modal Station and the Ballpark:

- From the Metrodome and the Warehouse District along the 5th Street LRT corridor (see Photo B2, above right).
- ◀ From new neighborhoods in the North Loop located on the western reaches of North 5th Street (as shown in the photo at left).
- ▶ From north and south along the Cedar Lake Trail (as shown in the photo at right).



**B4**

Figure 5.24 Photos of Lighted Gateway Spires

## LEGEND

- GATEWAY DISTRICTS**
- C1 – Transition between freeway zone and Downtown East
  - C2 – Transition zone between the high-intensity Downtown Core and Downtown East/Elliott Park
  - C3 – New air rights development district above “The Cut” over the Burlington Northern railway lands and Interstate 394

Creation of gateways to serve as points of entry to Downtown and “spires” to aid in navigation and orientation in Downtown East and the North Loop

Concepts: Transitioning between parts of downtown

- Gateway Zones are opportunities to re-knit Downtown together in the transitional spaces between different neighborhoods.



Figure 5.25 Map of Gateway Transition Zones

## CONCEPT: TRANSITIONING BETWEEN PARTS OF DOWNTOWN



**C1** The far eastern edge of Downtown East is often referred to as being “behind” the Metrodome. This zone has the potential to enhance the transition between the spaghetti junction of the freeway zone and the new and revitalized neighborhoods of Downtown East and Elliot Park.

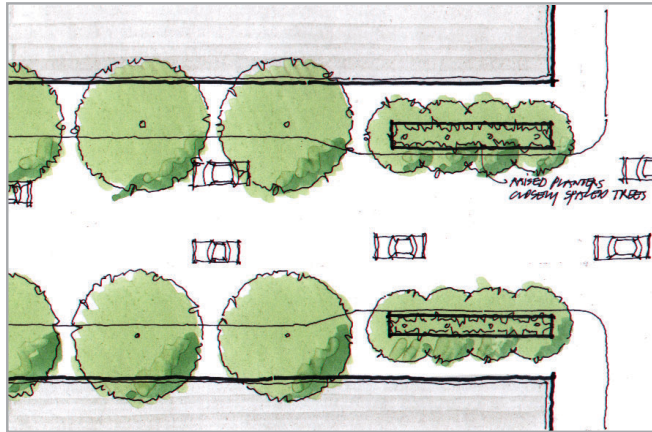


**C2** The linear zone between Fifth Avenue South and Park Avenue has the potential to enhance the transition between the high-intensity Downtown Core and the new and revitalized medium-intensity neighborhoods in Downtown East and Elliot Park.

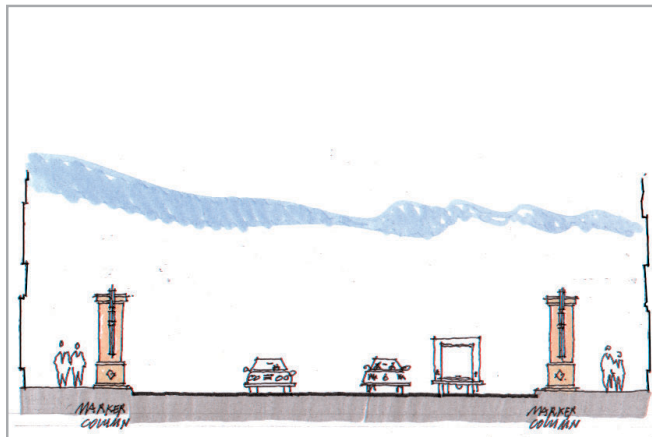


**C3** The vast area of underdeveloped land in “The Cut” – the area in and around the Burlington Northern railway lands and Interstate 394 – has the potential to enhance the transition between the Downtown Core and the new and revitalized medium-intensity neighborhoods in the North Loop.

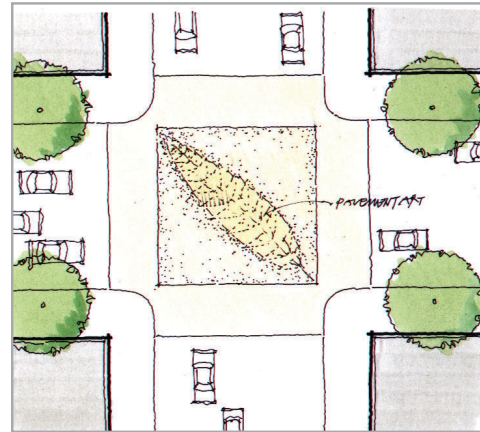
Figure 5.26 Photos: Gateway Transition Zones

**STREETSCAPE CHANGES**

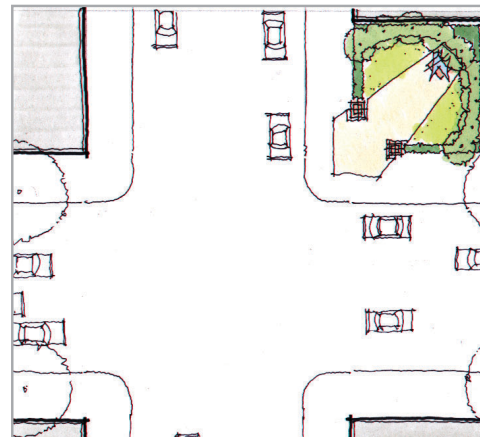
Changes in the patterns of streetscape, changes in street trees, or the introduction of raised planters near the gateway, suggest a subtle transition in the urban fabric.

**GATEWAY COLUMNS**

Paired columns, perhaps reflective of nearby architecture, create an immediate sense of a gateway.

**INTERSECTION TABLEAU**

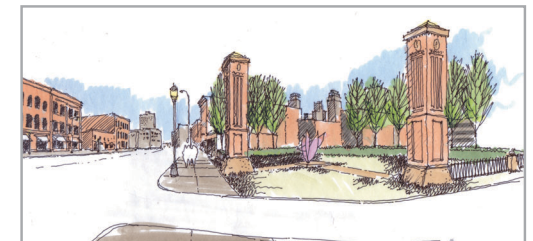
Small pocket parks could be a part of a gateway, using architectural features and plantings to highlight the gateway zone. Intersections at key gateways offer the opportunity for a pavement tableau as a gateway feature.

**POCKET PARK – TWO VIEWS**

The arrangement of elements as a gateway 'pocket park' might be used to reinforce views to downtown landmarks.

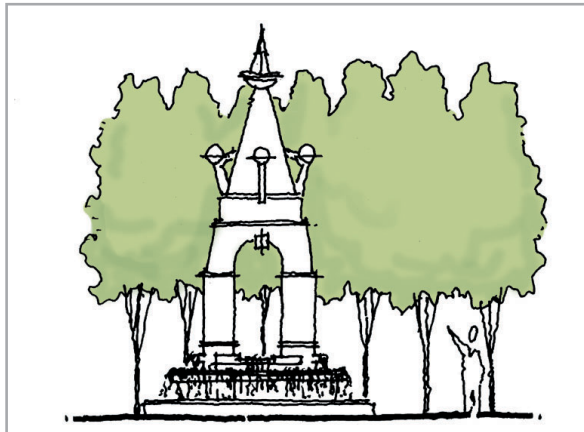
**GATEWAY PARK**

Gateway Park and Pavilion, created during the City Beautiful era, provided an elegant gateway to Minneapolis along Hennepin Avenue. An inscription on the Pavilion invited people to Minneapolis: "The Gateway: More than her gates, the city opens her heart to you." The park and pavilion were razed in the 1960s as a part of urban renewal.

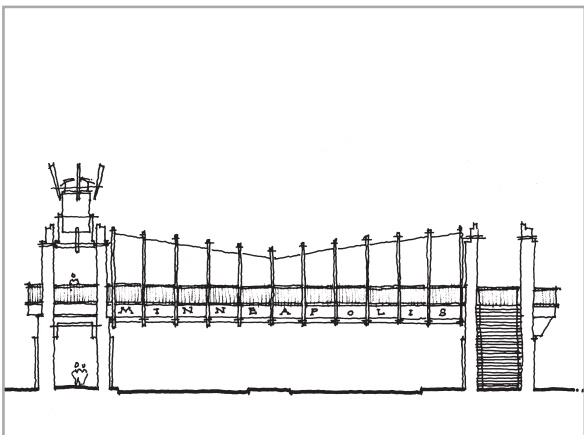
**GATEWAY ICONS**

Sample corner lot announcing arrival into neighborhood precinct.

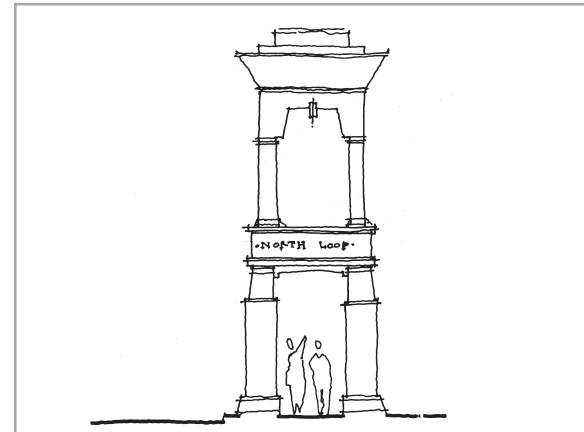
Figure 5.27 Prototypes for Gateway Icons 1

**GATEWAY FEATURE**

Where opportunities exist, the introduction of more playful or iconic elements might be used as a gateway element. In this case the orientation to pedestrians is vital.

**ROADWAY PORTAL**

Where pedestrian crossings are difficult or where grade opportunities are present, the creation of bridges that link pedestrian destinations and form a gateway for motorists might be explored.

**PEDESTRIAN PORTAL**

Passage through a structure is one of the most obvious gateway experiences. Placed along a walk, and developed as an interpretation of distinct character or as a public art piece, portals become inviting elements of the public realm.

**SIGNATURE BUILDINGS**

The placement of signature architectural pieces, kept in scale with a district, is a compelling method of creating the sense of a gateway.

Figure 5.28 Prototypes for Gateway Icons 2

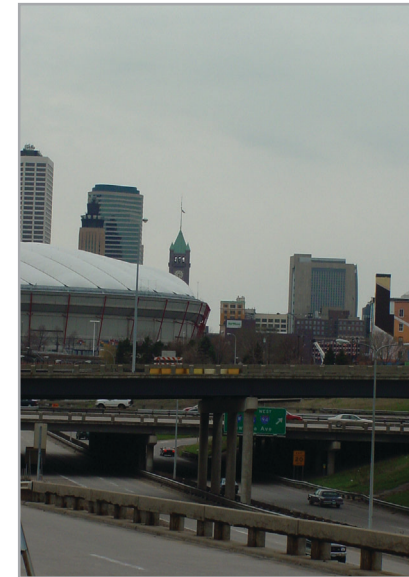




**1a**  
A shift in the Downtown street grid frames the view of the City Hall Clock tower from Park Avenue South (from as far away as Lake Street).



**1b**  
A shift in the Downtown street grid frames the view of the City Hall Clock tower from North 4th Street in the North Loop.



**1c**  
The City Hall Clock tower is aligned with and visible from Riverside Avenue on West Bank



**1d**  
Because the North Star Blanket Mill is visible along the Hiawatha alignment it will serve as a landmark / gateway for those arriving in Downtown by LRT.



**1e**  
The view into Downtown from Washington Avenue North is punctuated by a view of the landmark former Federal Reserve Bank (now Marquette Plaza).



**1f**  
The clock tower of the new Federal Reserve Bank is visible across the slightly rolling terrain of the North Loop from atop the hill where Olson Memorial Highway approaches Downtown.

Figure 5.30 Photos: Gateway Views to Downtown Landmarks

## LEGEND



VIEW CORRIDORS



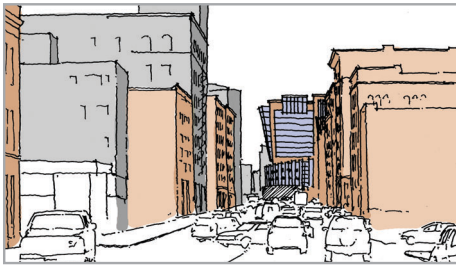
FOCAL POINT

- 2a – Washburn Crosby Mill
- 2b – Pillsbury 'A' Mill
- 2c – Crown Roller Mill and Third Avenue Bridge
- 2d – Burlington Northern Railroad Bridge
- 2e – Hawthorne Ramp
- 2f – IDS Tower
- 2g – General Mills mill in NE Mpls

Preservation and enhancement of significant view corridors in and through Downtown East and the North Loop

Concepts: Maintaining and enhancing view corridors

- Maintain and enhance view corridors to significant elements of downtown, especially to the city's historic mills, bridges, and noteworthy contemporary buildings.



Example: Potential rooftop development on the existing Hawthorne Ramp should mark the southern terminus of the view corridor through the Warehouse District along First Avenue North.

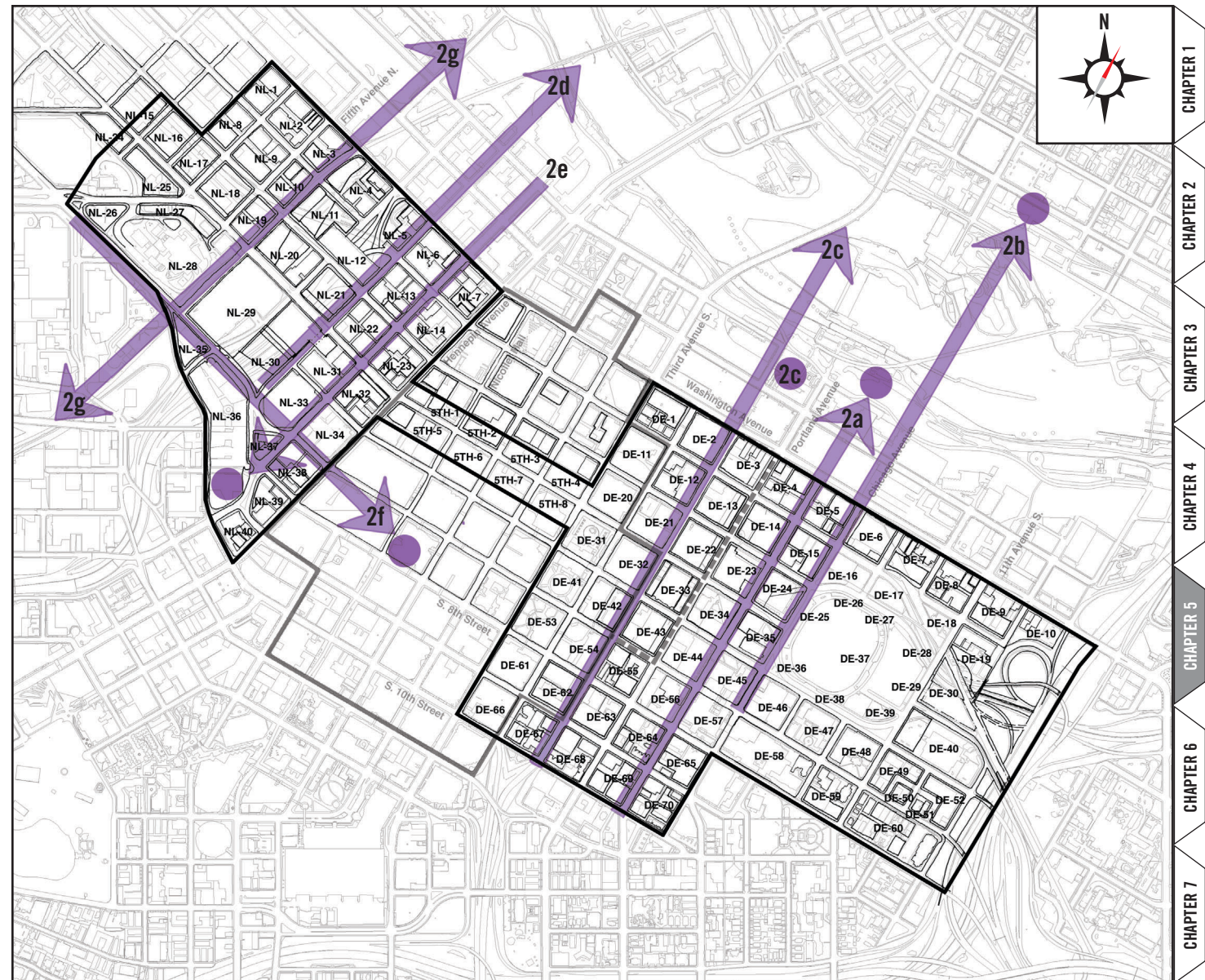


Figure 5.31 Map of Enhancing Existing View Corridors



**2a**  
The historic Washburn Crosby Mills punctuates the end of the view corridor looking north up Park Avenue from Elliot Park.



**2b**  
Located across the Mississippi River, the historic Pillsbury 'A' Mill punctuates the view corridor looking north up Chicago Avenue from the new Metrodome Plaza and the Downtown East LRT Station.



**2c**  
The historic Crown Roller Mill and the Third Avenue Bridge punctuate the view corridor looking north up Fifth Avenue South from Elliot Park.



**2d**  
The Burlington Northern Railroad bridge is visible from along the length of Second Avenue North in the Warehouse District.



**2e**  
Potential rooftop development on the existing Hawthorne Ramp should mark the southern terminus of the view corridor through the Warehouse District along First Avenue North.



**2f**  
The IDS Tower marks the view corridor looking east from North 7th Street.

**Figure 5.32 Photos of Enhancing Existing View Corridors**

## LEGEND



VIEW CORRIDORS



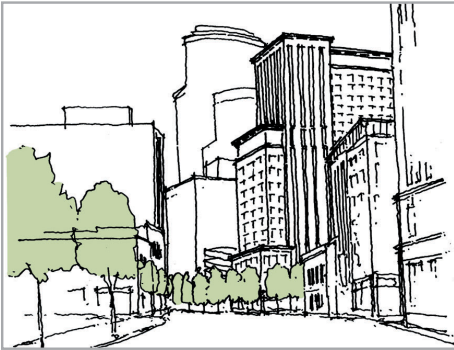
FOCAL POINT

- 3a – Potential new development on Nicollet Hotel Block and the west facade of the former Federal Reserve Bank (now Marquette Plaza)
- 3b – Potential development on the southwest corner of 3rd and Hennepin.
- 3c – New Central Library
- 3d – Potential development on the southeast corner of 4th and Hennepin
- 3e – Potential development on the southeast corner of 5th and Hennepin
- 3f – Potential development on the southwest corner of 5th and Hennepin

Preservation and enhancement of significant view corridors in and through Downtown East and the North Loop

Concepts: Taking advantage of grid shift and high visibility corners

- Design buildings and open spaces that take advantage of a shift in downtown's street grid and result in high visibility corners along Hennepin Avenue.



Example: New development at the southeast corner of Hennepin Avenue and South 4th Street should recognize the shift in the Downtown street grid by creating a building that marks the terminus of the view corridor.

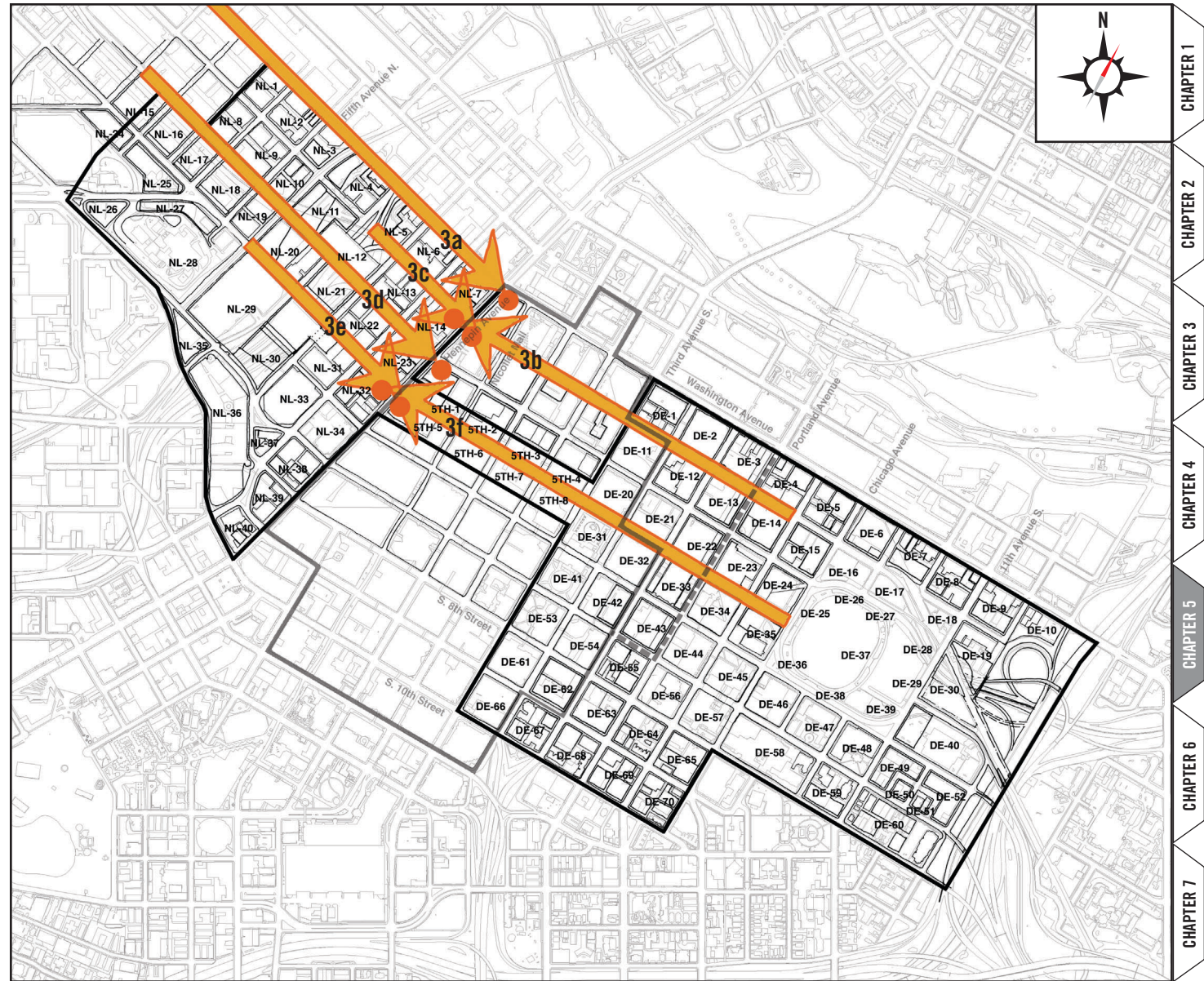


Figure 5.33 Map of Enhancing Existing View Corridors to Hennepin Avenue



**3a**  
The view into Downtown from Washington Avenue North is punctuated by the landmark former Federal Reserve Bank (now Marquette Plaza). New development on the Nicollet Hotel Block should respect and help frame this view.



**3b**  
New development on the southwest corner of 3rd and Hennepin should mark the view corridor into the core from Downtown East along South 3rd Street.



**3c**  
The new planetarium at the new Central Library will one day mark the view corridor into the core from the North Loop along North 4th Street.



**3d**  
New development on the southeast corner of 4th and Hennepin should accentuate the view corridor already punctuated by the Fifth Street Towers.



**3e**  
New development on the southeast corner of 5th and Hennepin should mark the view corridor into the core from the Baseball Stadium and Multi-Modal Station in the North Loop.



**3f**  
New development on the southwest corner of 5th and Hennepin should mark the view corridor into the Warehouse District from the Metrodome along the LRT corridor.

**Figure 5.34** Photos of Enhancing Existing View Corridors to Hennepin Avenue

### *Policies for Developing Gateways and View Corridors*

- *Proposed new construction in the Project Area should be evaluated for its sensitivity to preserving significant views of existing landmarks and/or enhancing view corridors that need further definition. The City should pursue formal mechanisms to ensure that property owners and developers have the necessary incentives to design and build individual projects in ways that respect and improve the overall built environment of Downtown.*
- *Proposed new construction in the Project Area should be evaluated for its sensitivity to creating and enhancing gateways into and within Downtown Minneapolis. The City should develop and pursue formal mechanisms to ensure that property owners and developers have the necessary incentives to design and build individual projects in ways that respect and improve the overall built of Downtown.*
- *The City should consider holding an international competition concerning gateway Designs to generate both citizen interest and design excellence. Suitable designs should be commissioned as opportunity arises.*

### **SHAPING THE CITY THROUGH THE DESIGN OF BUILDINGS**

Realizing appropriate densities for new and rehabilitated construction in the Project Area is the key ingredient to successfully forging Complete Communities in the Project Area. The benefits that come from mixed uses, transit-oriented development, and an expansion of Downtown housing – in numbers, kinds of housing units, and price points – are both cumulative and mutually reinforcing. Building and sustaining such momentum is essential for expanding the city's tax base. It is essential for encouraging growth of commercial retail, for improving transit ridership and for reinforcing the rationale for building future rail transit lines. Building and sustaining such momentum is also essential for establishing the means to build and maintain new parks and other public infrastructure improvements. If currently underutilized sites are under built, a tremendous set of opportunities is lost for another generation or longer; lost to another city or place more willing to accommodate change. Most importantly, it is essential for developing and reinforcing a sense of community in places that more-often-than-not feel like a wide open transition zone between the Downtown Core and communities at the far edges of the CBD. Realizing appropriate densities in the Project Area will not only improve the overall downtown built environment, it will bridge the chasm that currently isolates various downtown neighborhoods from one another. In this way, ensuring appropriate density of the built environment is the means for achieving a more holistic urban design for Downtown.

Density is a measure of the amount of built space located in a given geographic area. In planning terms, density is commonly expressed as a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) – the ratio of the gross floor area of a building to the gross area of the lot on which the building is located (see Figure 5.35, page 97). Specific recommendations for FARs are made in Chapter 6, (see page 121).

For the purposes of understanding the role of density in the overall design of the city, it is useful to consider the ingredients for how

specific buildings are designed and how this relates to the simultaneous shaping of the public realm. Three specific components of building design must be considered: siting, height, and massing. A well-designed building is the result of thoughtful and creative solutions that merge these components of building design in relation to one another. Likewise, a well-designed city is the result of thoughtful and creative solutions for a collection of individual buildings.

The following recommendations are made toward the establishment of a common design vocabulary, one that addresses the overarching context of building design in relation to the design of the urban environment as a whole. These guidelines are intended to encourage a new collection of structures that are sensitive to the goal of promoting greater density without sacrificing a human scaled environment. Because they address universal concerns about urban building design, they are normative. That being the case, these guidelines can accommodate a wide variety of stylistic interpretations.

### **Siting, Floor Plan, and Open Space**

As a means to reinforce a pedestrian scaled environment, developers should build up to (or within five feet of) the street front property line to establish a continuous building line within and across blocks throughout the Project Area. The exception to this guideline would be in locations where a well-defined open space is provided as a public amenity along the street.

All new full- and half-block development projects that are five stories and taller should include at least 10% of their ground floor area given over to public open space. Such open space is used to modify the impact of mid- and high-intensity development on the surrounding neighborhood by allowing for at-grade pocket parks, green spaces, and pedestrian arcades.

There are a variety of different configurations for incorporating open space into the ground floor plan of a typical downtown block.

**Density** is a measure of the amount of built space located in a given geographic area (i.e. housing, commercial office, commercial retail, lodging, etc.). The term “densification” refers to the desire to increase the amount of development on a given area of land or within a particular portion of a city. Densification is usually called for as a way to maximize the use of land relative to its inherent value.

**Floor Area Ratio (FAR)** is a measurement of building density upon a given parcel of land. It is the ratio of the gross floor area of the building or buildings to the gross area of the lot on which the building(s) is located.

The matrix at right illustrates various floor area ratios and expresses the resultant impact on building height and density.

The market analysis and development forecast for the Downtown Minneapolis (see Chapter 3) states that 13-17 million square feet of new office space can be expected in Downtown Minneapolis over the next twenty years. Therefore to accommodate the expected growth of Class A office space, the equivalent of up to 12 full city blocks will be needed. Thus a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 9.0 is needed to meet the full 12 block equivalent called for in the market analysis.




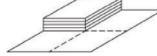
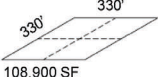


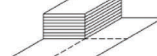


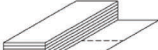
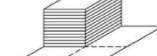
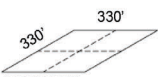


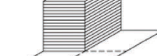

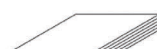






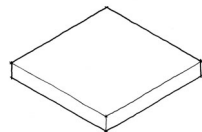
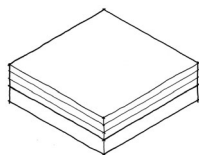
TYPICAL DOWNTOWN BLOCK	FULL BLOCK DEVELOPMENT	HALF BLOCK DEVELOPMENT	QUARTER BLOCK DEVELOPMENT	CHAPTER 1
 <p><b>FAR 1.0</b></p>	 <p>Building Covers Full Block at 1 Storey in height = 108,900 SF</p>	 <p>Building Covers Half Block at 2 Stories in height = 108,900 SF</p>	 <p>Building Covers Quarter Block at 4 Stories in height = 108,900 SF</p>	CHAPTER 2
 <p><b>FAR 3.0</b></p>	 <p>Building Covers Full Block at 3 Stories in height = 326,700 SF</p>	 <p>Building Covers Half Block at 6 Stories in height = 326,700 SF</p>	 <p>Building Covers Quarter Block at 12 Stories in height = 326,700 SF</p>	CHAPTER 3
 <p><b>FAR 5.0</b></p>	 <p>Building Covers Full Block at 5 Stories in height = 554,500 SF</p>	 <p>Building Covers Half Block at 10 Stories in height = 554,500 SF</p>	 <p>Building Covers Quarter Block at 20 Stories in height = 554,500 SF</p>	CHAPTER 4
 <p><b>FAR 7.0</b></p>	 <p>Building Covers Full Block at 7 Stories in height = 762,300 SF</p>	 <p>Building Covers Half Block at 14 Stories in height = 762,300 SF</p>	 <p>Building Covers Quarter Block at 28 Stories in height = 762,300 SF</p>	CHAPTER 5
 <p><b>FAR 9.0</b></p>	 <p>Building Covers Full Block at 9 Stories in height = 980,100 SF</p>	 <p>Building Covers Half Block at 18 Stories in height = 980,100 SF</p>	 <p>Building Covers Quarter Block at 36 Stories in height = 980,100 SF</p>	CHAPTER 6
 <p><b>FAR 11.0</b></p>	 <p>Building Covers Full Block at 11 Stories in height = 1,197,900 SF</p>	 <p>Building Covers Half Block at 22 Stories in height = 1,197,900 SF</p>	 <p>Building Covers Quarter Block at 44 Stories in height = 1,197,900 SF</p>	CHAPTER 7

Figure 5.35 Density / Floor Area Ratios



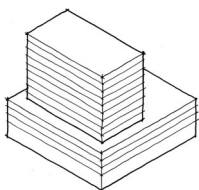
The **ground floor** of new buildings should be scaled to recognize their downtown location and to allow for changing ground-floor uses over a period of many decades

Figure 5.36  
Building Height Classifications – Ground Floor



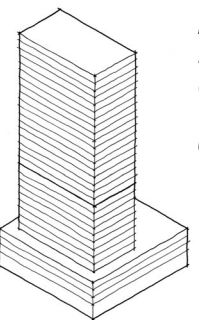
**Low-rise** development is one to four stories in height

Figure 5.37  
Building Height Classifications – Low-Rise



**Mid-rise** development is five to thirteen stories in height. A set back above the fourth floor gives the building a base that helps to create and maintain neighborhood scale while allowing medium density

Figure 5.38  
Building Height Classifications – Mid-Rise



**High-rise** development is fourteen stories in height and higher. Similar to mid-rise development, a set back above the fourth floor gives the building a base that helps to create and maintain neighborhood scale while allowing high-density development

Figure 5.39  
Building Height Classifications – High-Rise

Public open spaces should be located in such a way as to complement the function of a building's main access points and street level retail uses. They should be oriented toward and fully accessible to the general public. Public open space should be configured to allow pedestrian access through a block and to accommodate the preservation of specifically designated view corridors (see Figures 5.29 and 5.30, pages 90 and 91). To avoid penalizing a developer, the areas set aside as view corridors might be counted toward that block's prescribed open space requirement. Public open space should be designed as "defensible space", with doors opening onto them, and windows in the main and upper levels overlooking them.

All new buildings – and their associated open spaces – should be designed and sited in order to maximize the benefits of natural sunlight and to buffer pedestrians against strong winter winds. Wherever possible, rooftop decks, gardens, and green spaces should be encouraged, especially, but not exclusively, in buildings that contain a residential component.

### Building Height and Massing

Although density is the critical factor in assuring that underdeveloped lands within the Project Area are developed to maximum potential, from a design perspective it is important to keep in mind the role of building height. In keeping with the aims of establishing land-use categories that encourage mixed-use development throughout the Project Area (see Figure 4.3), three classifications are set forth for building height:

**Low-rise:** Buildings that are a maximum of four stories in height. In order to ensure the highest and best use of land in the Project Area, the only situation in which low-rise buildings should be approved is for new and rehabilitated low-density residential development on sites within the Ninth Street Historic Street (see Figures 4.3, 5.36, and 5.39).

### *Policies for Shaping the City through the Design of Buildings*

- *Enhancing the existing design context in Downtown East and the North Loop should be accomplished through the ideal of developing a “family” or collection of buildings. The whole of such a collection matters as much as the individual style of any one building. Consistent – but workable – standards should be followed for the siting, height, and mass of each new building.*
- *It is recommended that, on average 10%, of the developable area of every full block or half block project be set aside for public open space. Smaller, infill sites should be exempt from this prescription. This residual space should be designed specifically for public realm use, with decorative paving, street furniture, trees, public art, water features, pedestrian lighting, planted areas and other amenities.*

**Mid-rise:** Buildings that are five stories to thirteen stories in height. Mid-rise development should be considered the norm for most new construction and rehabilitation projects in the Project Area because buildings of this scale have already become the norm in many parts of the Project Area, particularly the Warehouse District and in the northern portions of Downtown East (see Figures 4.3, 5.36, and 5.38).

**High-rise:** Buildings that are fourteen stories in height and taller. High-rise development should be pursued primarily within the Downtown Core and the proposed extension of the Downtown Core. It may be suitable in a limited number of specifically designated locations outside the Core as specified in the Land Use Plan (see Figure 4.3, 5.36, and 5.39).

Massing of all new construction must be composed in such a manner as to create a positive, pedestrian oriented street environment. A major factor in producing such an environment is the scale of surrounding buildings. The Master Plan proposes a simple, straightforward approach to the articulation of building height, elevation and massing. Most rights-of-way in the downtown are 80 feet wide. To achieve a street environment with comfortable proportions, it is recommended that any building that is taller than fifty feet in height should have a set back above the fourth story. Upper levels of buildings would be set back a minimum of 15 feet from the building base to help maintain the proportions set by the building base. By building the base of buildings up to the property line and creating setbacks above the fourth floor (or 50 feet), the height of mid-rise and high-rise buildings will not overwhelm the neighborhood scale of the surrounding streets and sidewalks.

All buildings should be developed as tripartite forms consisting of a base, a mid-section and a top, whether full-block, half-block, or quarter-block. Each building should have a recognizable building base set off by a uniform cornice line four floors above grade. The middle portion of the building should be setback above the fourth

floor to provide a better scaled pedestrian environment at the street level. The top should, at the least, consist of a distinctively expressed penthouse. Low-rise structures, of similar siting, should have a base, middle and a uniform cornice line. Regardless of their height, new structures built on infill sites (sites that are less than one-quarter block and can be found between existing structures) should be of similar height to adjacent buildings, wherever practicable (see Figure 5.40, page 100).

**Building Base:** In keeping with the character of downtown neighborhoods, the base of a building should be designed to appear that it bears the weight of the mass above and visually support the building. The base should be approximately four stories high and should be defined by one or more of the following features:

- Thicker-than-normal walls
- Richly textured materials (i.e. tile or masonry treatment)
- Special cladding materials (i.e. rock, ceramic tile or marble)

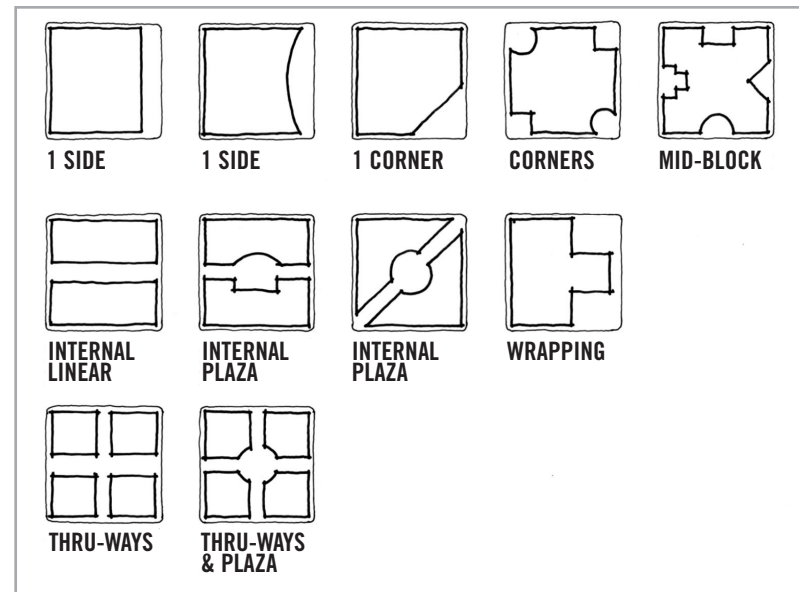
A uniform roof cornice line through the precinct should take precedence over individual building expression.

**Mid-Section of Building:** Materials within the middle portion of a structure should be characterized by a combination of cladding materials such as masonry, concrete or metal combined with a regular repeat of windows that complement the base and top of the building. The use of reflective mirror cladding should be discouraged.

**Top of Building:** The top of a building should create an attractive profile against the backdrop of the sky and surrounding buildings. It should be defined by one or more of the following features:

- Cornice Treatment
- Roof overhang with brackets
- Stepped parapet

The diagram at right shows eleven different configurations for how to incorporate open space into the ground floor plan of a typical Downtown block. Such open space is used to modify the impact of a development on the surrounding neighborhood by allowing for at-grade pocket parks, green spaces, and pedestrian arcades.



The diagram at right shows ten different configurations for how to incorporate set backs and air space into the above-ground massing of a typical Downtown block. Such set backs and air space are used to modify the impact of a high-intensity development on the surrounding neighborhood by allowing air, light, and views to penetrate into and/or through the block. Each tower is set back from a four-story building base that is standard throughout the Project Area in Downtown East and the North Loop.

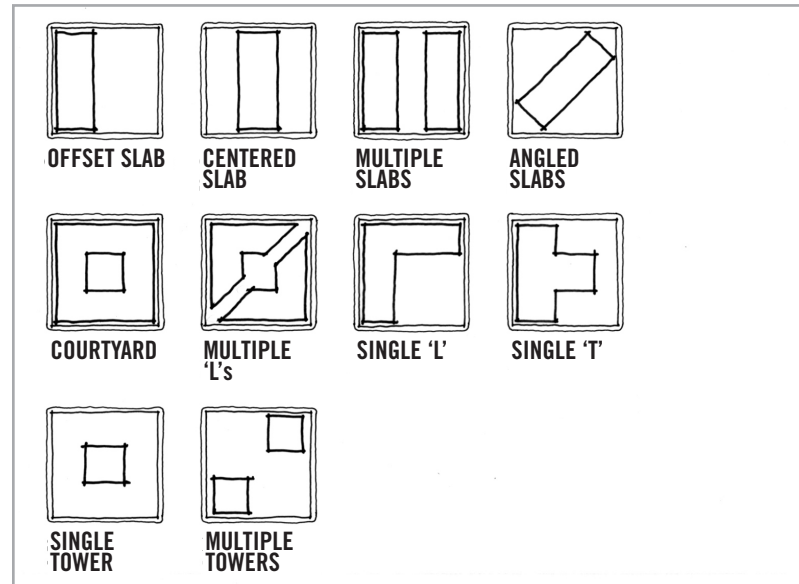


Figure 5.40 Plan Typologies for Building Massing

Although classical in origin, this method of organizing building form need not result in strictly classical building design. Asymmetrical forms, as well as elements that “break through” any of the three components may be used to create varied, exciting buildings, while still adhering to the intent of this recommendation.

Above the fourth floor, building towers should be placed to maintain view corridors through the city (see Figures 5.31 and 5.32, pages 92 and 93) and to orient the building to maximize natural sunlight. A variety of standard options are available and can be customized to creatively address these issues simultaneously (see Figure 5.41, page 102).

#### **Illustrative Aerial Views of the Project Area**

As a means to better appreciate how the city is shaped through the accumulated individual design of a collection of buildings the Land Use Plan set forth in Chapter Four was translated into a three-dimensional computer generated model. This model is purely illustrative, but it helps to better understand the consequences of various design decisions concerning the siting, height, and mass of buildings in the downtown landscape. City blocks were given 3-D form by cross-referencing building classifications for building height and density (Low, Medium and High), with a variety of siting typologies.

The 3-D model might be looked upon as a “living” document that the City adds to in the future as need and opportunities arise.

An immediate benefit, however, is the ability to specify exact viewpoints of interest and then quickly generate images of the general massing recommended for a particular site, block, or location. A series of sample images are contained for reference (see Figures 5.42 through 5.45, pages 103-106).

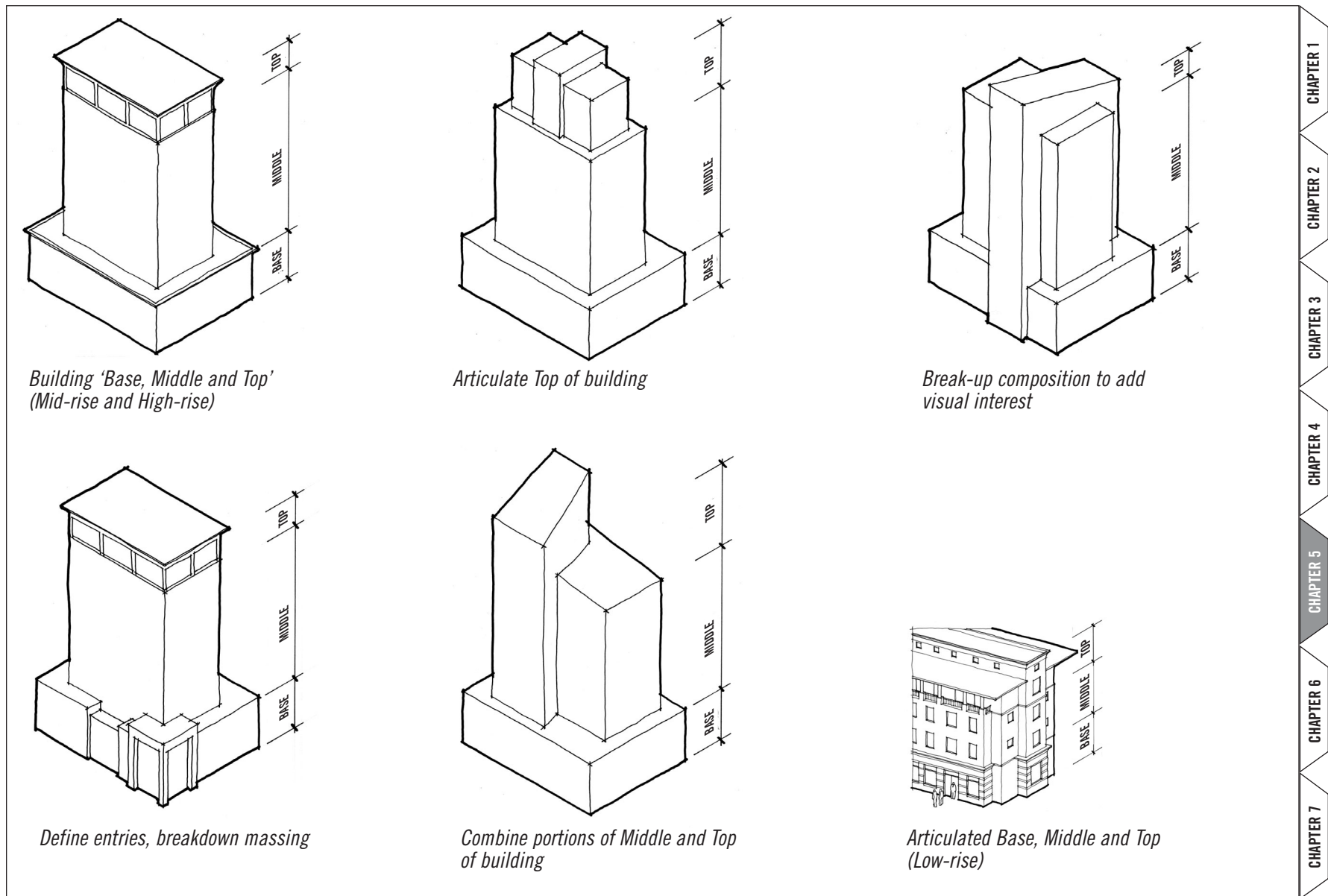


Figure 5.41 Building Massing Options

## LEGEND












	PROPOSED OPEN SPACE
	CIVIC
	HOSPITAL
	CHURCH
	OFFICE
	MIXED USED (OFFICE / COMMERCIAL PRIMARY USE)
	MIXED USE (RESIDENTIAL PRIMARY USE)
	RESIDENTIAL
	LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
	PARKING / UTILITY
	CULTURAL / ENTERTAINMENT / RECREATION



Figure 5.42 Massing Model of Project Area: Looking Northwest from above I-35 / I-94 Commons

## LEGEND























	PROPOSED OPEN SPACE
	CIVIC
	HOSPITAL
	CHURCH
	OFFICE
	MIXED USED (OFFICE / COMMERCIAL PRIMARY USE)
	MIXED USE (RESIDENTIAL PRIMARY USE)
	RESIDENTIAL
	LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
	PARKING / UTILITY
	CULTURAL / ENTERTAINMENT / RECREATION



Figure 5.43 Massing Model of Project Area: Looking Southeast from above the North Loop

## LEGEND

	PROPOSED OPEN SPACE
	CIVIC
	HOSPITAL
	CHURCH
	OFFICE
	MIXED USED (OFFICE / COMMERCIAL PRIMARY USE)
	MIXED USE (RESIDENTIAL PRIMARY USE)
	RESIDENTIAL
	LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
	PARKING / UTILITY
	CULTURAL / ENTERTAINMENT / RECREATION

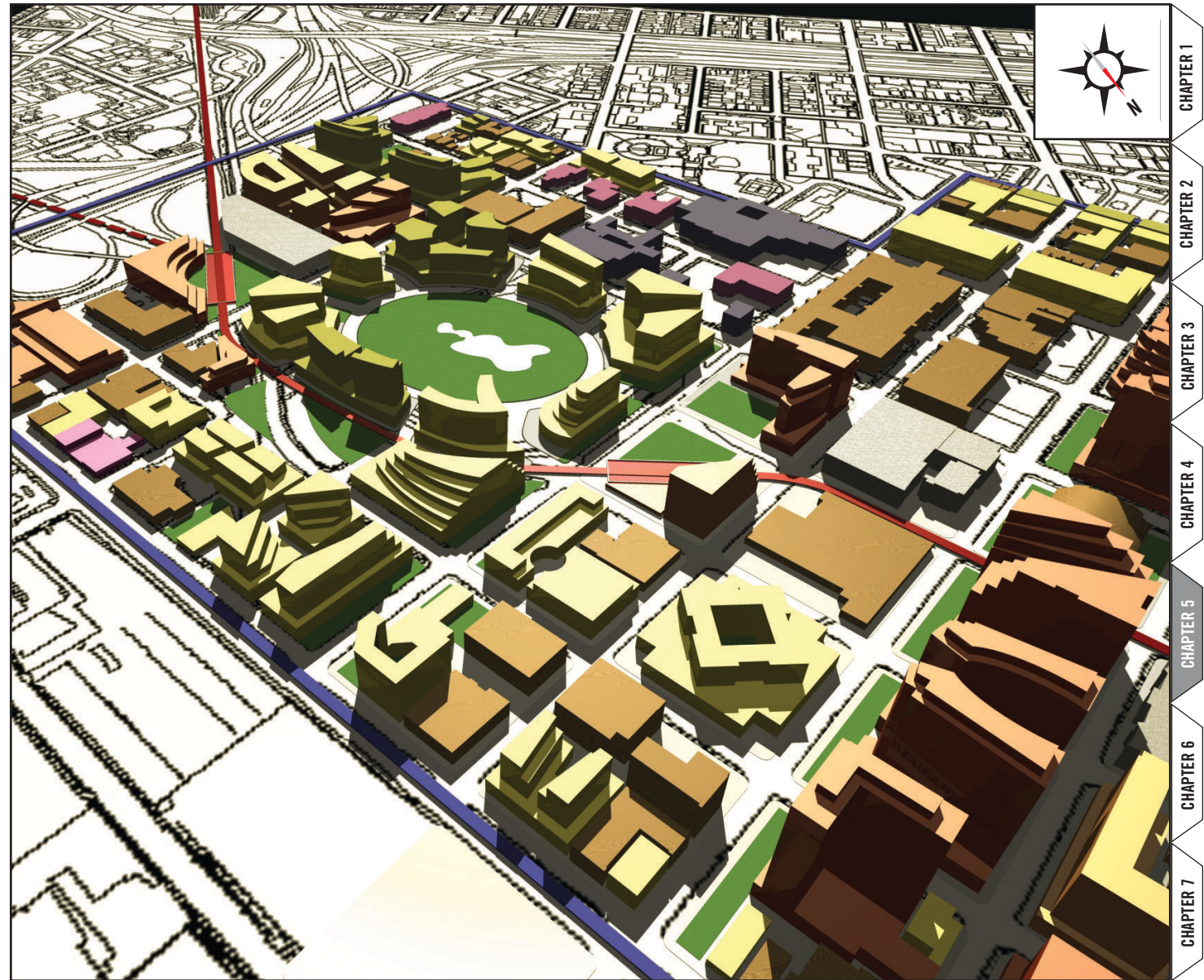













Figure 5.44 Massing Model of Project Area: Downtown East from above the Milwaukee Road Depot

## LEGEND

	PROPOSED OPEN SPACE
	CIVIC
	HOSPITAL
	CHURCH
	OFFICE
	MIXED USED (OFFICE / COMMERCIAL PRIMARY USE)
	MIXED USE (RESIDENTIAL PRIMARY USE)
	RESIDENTIAL
	LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
	PARKING / UTILITY
	CULTURAL / ENTERTAINMENT / RECREATION

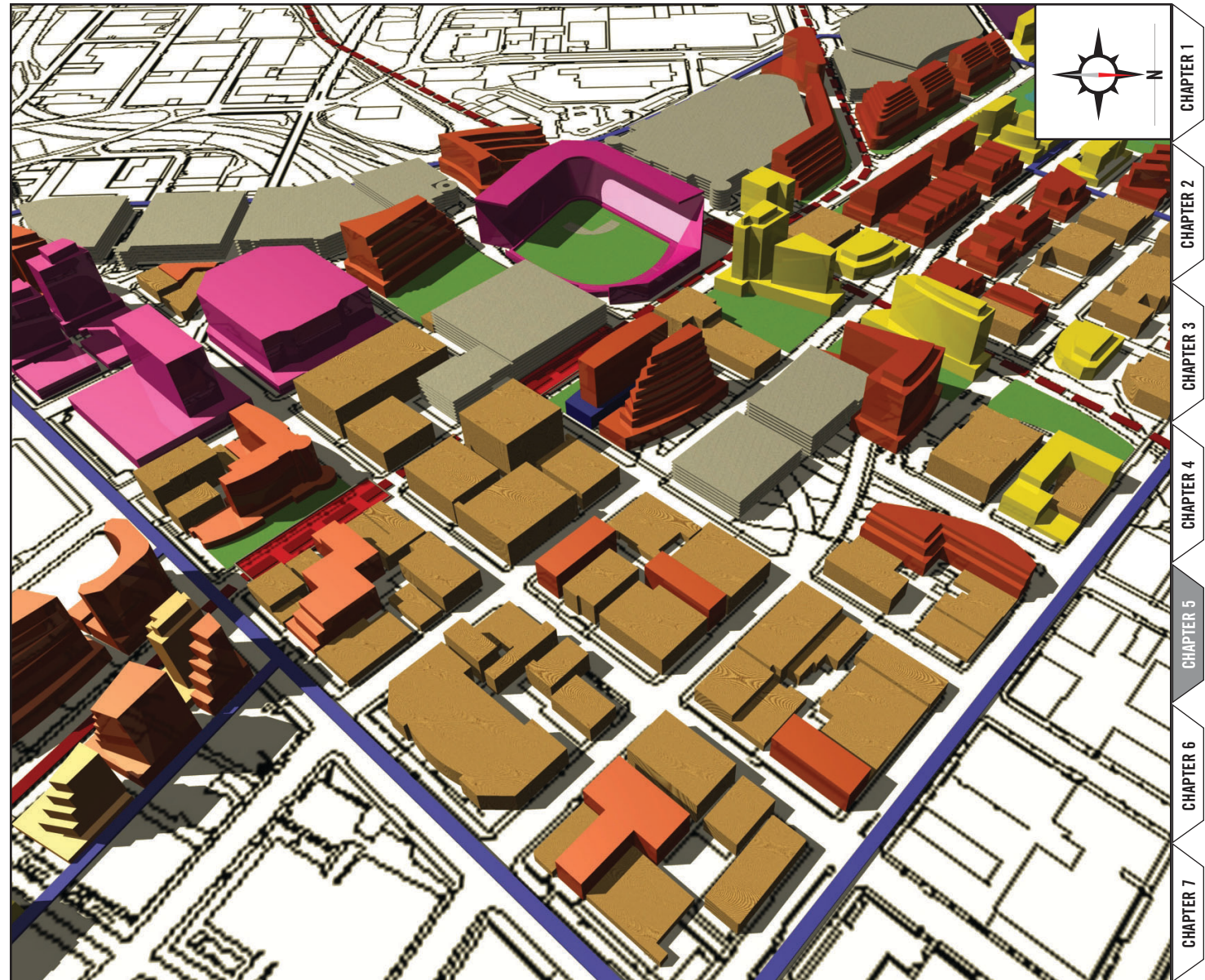


Figure 5.45 Massing Model: The North Loop from above the intersection of Hennepin Avenue and Washington Avenue